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ABSTRACT

This study found that the abuse of girls in the coeducational schools where the research took place was widespread and took the form of aggressive sexual behavior, intimidation and physical assault by older boys, sexual advances by male teachers, and corporal punishment and verbal abuse by both female and male teachers (on boys as well as girls). Younger girls in particular were fearful of male sexual advances or intimidation. An unsettling and sometimes violent environment is neither conducive to girls' learning nor to their forming mature relations with boys (with implications for the spread of HIV/AIDS among adolescents). Girls in the single-sex school were not protected from sexual advances outside the school. Male sexual aggression in schools appears to be institutionalized and considered as normal. Girls respond on the whole with resignation and passivity. Schools are themselves complicit in the abuse in that they fail to discipline perpetrators (whether pupils or teachers), deny that abuse exists, and foster an authoritarian culture where the behavior of teachers cannot be questioned. School-based abuse is a reflection of abuse found elsewhere--in the home and community. "Sugar daddies" in particular seek to lure girls into sexual relations with gifts and money. This widespread abuse goes unchecked because of the low status accorded women by society, where men invade women's private space with impunity and girls are socialized to expect subordination to men in adult life. Lack of will to address the issue by government bodies helps to perpetuate and condone it. Eliminating abuse will require a significant change in school culture, and in the attitudes and behavior of teachers, school heads, officials, parents, and pupils, both boys and girls. Appended are: Numbers Interviewed; Tables (6); Extracts from the Interviews from Boys and Girls; Teachers' Definition of Abuse; Pupils' Workshops and Teachers' Workshops. (Author/RT)

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EDUCATION RESEARCH

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PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION OF THE ABUSE OF GIRLS IN ZIMBABWEAN JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Fiona Leach and Pamela Machakanja
With Jennifer Mandoga

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2000

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Role play of a teacher taking revenge on a girl who has rejected his advances by beating her in class

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ACRONYMS

ARHEP	Adolescent Reproductive Health Education Project
AIDS	acquired immune deficiency syndrome
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DFID	Department for International Development
HIV	human immuno-deficiency virus (which causes AIDS)
NGO	non-governmental organisation
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
Sida	Swedish International Development Agency
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

ABSTRACT

This study found that the abuse of girls in the co-educational schools where the research took place was widespread and took the form of aggressive sexual behaviour, intimidation and physical assault by older boys; sexual advances by male teachers; and corporal punishment and verbal abuse by both female and male teachers (on boys as well as girls).Younger girls in particular were fearful of male sexual advances or intimidation. An unsettling and sometimes violent environment is neither conducive to girls' learning nor to their forming mature relations with boys (with implications for the spread of HIV/AIDS among adolescents). Girls in the single-sex school were not protected from sexual advances outside the school.

Male sexual aggression in schools appears to be institutionalised and considered as 'normal'. Girls respond on the whole with resignation and passivity. Schools are themselves complicit in the abuse in that they fail to discipline perpetrators (whether pupils or teachers), deny that abuse exists and foster an authoritarian culture where the behaviouf of teachers cannot be questioned. School-based abuse is a reflection of abuse found elsewhere - in the home and the community. 'Sugar daddies' in particular seek to lure girls into sexual relations with gifts and money. This widespread abuse goes unchecked because of the low status accorded women by society, where men invade women's private space with impunity and girls are socialised to expect subordination to men in adult life. Lack of will to address the issue by government bodies helps to perpetuate and condone it.

Eliminating abuse will require a significant change in school culture, and in the attitudes and behaviour of teachers, school heads, Ministry officials, parents and pupils, both boys and girls.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The context

The research discussed in this report addresses school-based abuse of adolescent girls. The purpose of the study was to investigate the nature and pattern of abuse of girls in a number of schools in Zimbabwe, examine ways in which the schools addressed the issue of abuse, and recommend strategies for confronting and reducing its incidence. The research was carried out in three co-educational junior secondary schools and one all-girls' secondary school in one region of Zimbabwe during 1998-1999. Two of the schools were located in a rural setting, one in a peri-urban area and the fourth in an urban centre. In-depth interviews were held with 112 girls mostly aged 13-15 in Forms 1-3, supplemented by interviews with boys, teachers and head teachers, parents and some government officials.

Abuse is a difficult area to research because it is associated with sexual abuse, a taboo topic which most people would prefer to ignore. Nevertheless, there has been for some time increasing acknowledgement in many countries around the world that serious abuse of children exists in the home, the community and the labour market. Abuse in the school is less recognised and, in sub-Saharan Africa, is only just being exposed and talked about openly. Little as yet has been done to stamp it out.

Both **sexual** and **non-sexual** forms of school-based abuse were included in the study. **Sexual abuse** was any kind of abuse which had a sexual dimension, e.g. physical, verbal, psychological or emotional. **Non-sexual abuse** in the context of this study took the form of corporal punishment, which, although banned in Zimbabwe except in clearly specified situations, is widely used, on girls as well as boys, and by female teachers as well as male. The two types of abuse are linked, for an environment which tolerates the illegal use of corporal punishment is one which is likely to be equally permissive of other forms of violence, including sexual abuse.

Although the focus of the study was on school-based abuse, we did not wish to isolate it from its broader context - that of the gendered society. Alongside abuse by male teachers and pupils, we therefore included abuse experienced by girls in the proximity of the school, e.g. on their way to and from school, usually by older men known as 'sugar daddies' who seek to lure girls into sexual relationships with money or gifts.

Findings

In the co-educational schools, we found much interest in sexual matters and much sex-oriented activity. This was no different from what one would expect in any co-educational secondary school in any country. The interest of the research was to uncover the reasons why male behaviour in and around the school went beyond the acceptable to the abusive, and in so doing turned the school into a hostile and sometimes violent environment for girls. Even in the single-sex school, the girls were not totally protected from abuse, as the report shows.

In the mixed schools, although there were a few girls in the sample who had seemingly happy relationships with boys, all too often sex-oriented activity became abusive. This was because it usually entailed unsolicited and intimidating male

behaviour which continually violated the girls' private space and not infrequently led to sexual assault. One set of perpetrators were older male pupils, who would force themselves aggressively on the younger girls' attention, accosting them in the corridors and grounds, entering their classrooms uninvited and waiting for them in gangs after school. They would try to touch them provocatively on the breasts or buttocks. They would also propose to them, sometimes by sending them love letters; if they were turned down, they would threaten the girls, shout abuse intended to demean and humiliate them, and sometimes beat them. Money played an important part in these demonstrations of male sexuality: they gave small gifts of money to girls or bought them snacks, in an attempt to bribe them into a sexual liaison The second set of perpetrators were male teachers who would abuse their position of trust and authority to make sexual advances towards female pupils and attempt to lure them into sexual relationships. This was widespread in the co-educational schools studied, with advances made to young pupils in Form 1 as well as (more commonly) to the older girls in the upper forms. Teachers would pursue their prey often quite openly during classes, which suggests they had little fear of being exposed. Teachers, like sugar daddies, used money and gifts as well as insincere promises of marriage to entice girls.

Pupils and teachers alike appeared to see such behaviour, whether by male teachers or male pupils, as an inevitable and 'natural' part of school life. Like bullying in general, it was an institutionalised feature of the school culture. This was not surprising given that the pattern of male behaviour was little different to that found in the domestic and public domains. For the majority of girls it was an unwanted part of their daily lives but, as it was regarded as routine, nobody sought to change it.

This behaviour was abusive because it exploited the difference of power between the perpetrator (whether male pupil or teacher) and the victim. Even where it was of a relatively mild form, the fact that nobody soughf to control and punish it meant that it had the potential to rapidly become serious abuse. Most importantly, the fact that male teachers pursued sexual liaisons with girls with impunity passed on the message to boys that such behaviour was acceptable. It made them not only bolder and more aggressive in their behaviour towards girls but also increased their contempt for them.

Male pupils and teachers crowding in on girls' private space and exploiting their position of strength to coerce them into sexual liaisons is a manifestation of the school as a **site of sexual violence** for girls. Verbal abuse, which was used by almost all teachers, male and female, and corporal punishment, which was widespread in the mixed schools (and used on girls and boys), were further manifestations of school-based violence. Girls were beaten almost as much as boys, despite it being banned in the case of girls. There was evidence that verbal abuse was used more frequently towards girls and was specifically designed to denigrate and humiliate the female sex. In the all-girls' school, verbal abuse was common (as if to compensate for the ban on corporal punishment, which was strictly enforced there) and there was some indication that a few male teachers might also behave inappropriately towards girls.

Abuse in schools reflected abuse and violence **in the home**. It was clear that a few girls were at risk of, or had experienced, sexual abuse by relatives or neighbours but more common were beatings, excessive domestic labour demands, neglect (lack of love, attention and respect) and verbal abuse. One consequence of ill-treatment at

home is that girls may be more responsive to some boys' or adult men's attention out of unhappiness or fear, and hence vulnerable to exploitation.

Girls were also exposed to abuse in the proximity of the school. Male strangers would proposition or sometimes assault them at bus stops and in market places, on the road to and from school, and while travelling on public transport. **Sugar daddies** were known to frequent the area near the schools. Girls in the single-sex school were also exposed to such abusive behaviour; indeed, the location of the school in the town centre made them particularly at risk.

It was difficult to obtain a true picture of how abusive sexual relationships developed and to determine whether girls entered freely into them or were coerced. We found that the distinction between an abusive and a consensual relationship was often blurred. It was clear that not all the girls were passive victims of unsolicited male attention and that some responded positively to advances by older boys and even by teachers and sugar daddies. In fact a surprisingly high number of girls were reported to have sugar daddies. What appeared to be most likely was that girls would accept small gifts and money from older boys and men, sometimes out of necessity, not realising that this would be used at a later date to coerce them into having sex. In all these cases, the relationship has to be condemned as abusive because the girl, whether coerced or consenting, is being lured into an exploitative relationship.

Causes and consequences

The school-based abuse of girls is clearly related to the low socio-economic status of women in society. In Zimbabwe, as in much of Africa, men often view women as their property and expect them to serve and obey. The boys in the school were fulfilling the role into which they were being socialised by aggressively demanding the girls' attention and sexual favours, and being ready to pay for them. There was consensus among both girls and boys (the latter with much condemnation) that girls entered sexual relationships with adult men primarily for money. However, while being condemned for this, the girls were also anticipating their future role as adult women in a society which teaches them to look to men for physical, financial and moral support. The girls themselves were aware of their low status and it manifested itself in their own low self-esteem and passive acceptance of male aggression. Very few girls took direct action when harassed or physically assaulted, partly from fear of further violence and reprisals but also from resignation, an acceptance that this was how things were, and a desire not to draw attention to oneself. They also saw themselves as responsible for their own problems and mistakes because they were female. Along with the boys, parents and teachers interviewed, they saw girls who dropped out of school or were expelled as a result of pregnancy, as having alone brought this misfortune upon themselves.

The study found that, in a society where women are expected to be financially dependent on men, family poverty made girls particularly vulnerable to abuse. Many girls in the sample said that their family was unable to provide them with enough money to pay for school fees, bus fares, lunches and books. The peer culture aggravated the situation because not only did girls need money for basic necessities, they also wanted to be seen to have pocket money to spend. The school reproduced the materialistic world outside by allowing the sale of snacks and drinks during break

times and vendors also sold at the school gates. Those who were able to afford such items were admired or envied, and in this situation girls could easily be tempted to accept money or snacks from male pupils, teachers or sugar daddies, thus drawing themselves unwittingly into a relationship of obligation and dependence.

Alongside poverty and peer pressure, there was evidence that the break up of the traditional family, which was widespread (whether as a result of AIDS-related death, divorce, separation or migration), also made girls more vulnerable to abuse. It was striking that over half the girls in this sample were not living with both biological parents and a quarter were not living with either biological parent. Girls were said to be more affected than boys by such break ups and they were clearly more vulnerable than boys, as it is easier for the latter to find casual work and they are less at risk of sexual abuse.

Male aggression and female resignation co-existed in the mixed schools in large part due to the complacency of the school leadership and the Ministry. In the mixed-sex schools little punitive or disciplinary action appeared to be taken, either against boys who harassed and assaulted girls, or against teachers who administered corporal punishment regularly or make sexual advances to girls. By doing nothing, the school was in fact condoning abuse. Even if a girl became pregnant by a teacher, it may well not be reported or if reported, not result in dismissal. Likewise boys who indulged in violent behaviour towards girls or got the girl pregnant were not expelled. Lack of evidence was usually the excuse given for inaction. Teaching staff too were complicit in this because they chose to turn a blind eye to what was going on around them; female teachers seemed particularly guilty in this respect. Furthermore, by projecting the teacher as a figure of authority and respect who should not be questioned by either parents or pupils, the school is helping to perpetuate abusive behaviour.

As for the consequences of the abuse, sexual and non-sexual, on girls, it was clear that those interviewed were troubled and frightened by the violent behaviour of boys and sexual advances by teachers, as well as by excessive corporal punishment. For them, the school was not a secure and conducive environment in which to live and learn. The risk of sexual advances from male teachers made them participate less in class for fear of being singled out for their attention and their movement around the school was restricted by fear of being accosted by older boys.

Not surprisingly, girls had little trust in their teachers and did not confide in them. This made attempts to teach them about personal and sexual development through the recently introduced subject of Guidance and Counselling ineffective. The girls felt that the teachers did not have their interests at heart and the teachers did not consider the subject important. They had also not been trained to teach it effectively. As a result, many girls remained alarmingly ignorant of matters relating to female puberty and sexuality. At the same time, many boys expressed alarmingly negative and biased opinions about girls, an attitude which needs to be changed if Zimbabwe is to become an equitable society.

Action

In the final stages of the research, recommendations for strategic actions to address school-based abuse of girls (and boys) were developed through workshops with pupils

and teachers. It is clear that a reduction in abusive behaviour towards girls requires a radical change in school culture, and ultimately in society's view of women and girls. The broader issues of bullying, which affects boys as well as girls, and corporal punishment will also have to be addressed, as the sexual abuse of girls is part and parcel of a school culture which institutionalises a variety of forms of aggression and violent behaviour. This will require a holistic approach. The starting point is surely to break the silence at all levels, among girls, teachers, school heads, Ministry officials and parents.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since 1990, as part of the drive for universal primary education, there has been a considerable international effort to get more girls into school. Girls constitute two-thirds of all out-of-school children (UNESCO 1998). The need to develop specific strategies to address the problem of girls' under-enrolment, as opposed to merely seeking to increase the total number of school places available, has spawned a number of studies around girls' education. However, most of this research has concentrated on the economic, social and cultural barriers to girls' schooling, in other words barriers external to the school (e.g. Colclough et al 1998, King and Hill 1993, Brock and Cammish 1997). It is only recently that studies examining the gendered structure of schooling have been carried out (Anderson-Levitt 1998, Kutnick 1998, Stephens 1998, Gordon 1993; see also Odaja and Heneveld 1995). In these, some attention has been given to the role that informal school practices and teachers' attitudes play in perpetuating sex differentiation and discouraging girls (and sometimes boys) from attending. It is now recognised that the way in which schooling is organised and delivered sends subtle but powerful daily messages to pupils about the gender roles they can expect to play in adult life. In the majority of cases, these messages underscore the authority and superiority of males and implicitly endorse gender-differentiated roles which reinforce girls' negative self-perceptions and limit their expectations. Although governments and donors have expressed concern over the low academic achievement of girls in many countries, they have been slow to acknowledge the link between this low achievement, the school culture, and low self-esteem and expectations of women and girls.

Within these studies, one aspect of the reality of school life for girls which may affect both their attendance and their achievement has been almost totally ignored. That is the existence of a school culture which tolerates abusive behaviour and violence towards girls. Very little is known about why and under what circumstances abuse in schools takes place and internationally accessible studies which seek to address this issue are few: examples are Gordon (1993), Gouws (1997), Hallam (1994). Given the commitments made by governments world wide under the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, it is crucial that the reality behind this abuse be exposed and its causes addressed.

1.1 The research study

The research discussed in this paper addresses school-based abuse of girls in one province of Zimbabwe. Abuse is a difficult area to research because it is largely a taboo topic, either ignored or unrecognised. Nevertheless, there is increasing acknowledgement in many countries around the world that serious abuse of children exists in the home, the community and the labour market (and the literature available in the UK bears witness to this, with much research having been carried out in particular into the sexual abuse of children in the home). In recognition of its commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the government in Zimbabwe has sought to address the problem directly. Two recent initiatives of note have been the establishment by the Ministry of Social Welfare of a Child Welfare Forum in 1995, with assistance from UNICEF, and that of the Victim Friendly Court system for child

victims of rape by the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs in 1997, with assistance from DANIDA.

There is currently in Zimbabwe much public attention directed at the high incidence of sexual abuse of girls in the home and community, and also a limited reporting in the media of high profile cases of teachers accused of raping or getting schoolgirls pregnant. A study of the under-achievement of girls in junior secondary schools in the early 1990s by Rosemary Gordon was responsible for bringing the issue of abuse by teachers in Zimbabwe to the attention of the research community. In other countries of sub-Saharan Africa, the scale of schoolgirl abuse is now being acknowledged and talked about. However, in-depth research is lacking; one exception is a small-scale study (which confirms many of the findings here) carried out in Malawi by Nampota and Waziri 1998. More common have been studies of sexual harassment of female students in higher education (Zindi 1998, Gaidzanwa 1993, Kathree 1992). There appears to be a particular reluctance to admit that abuse goes on in school and is often perpetrated by teachers, who are seen as figures of respect and authority, and the guardians and protectors of our children. We want to believe that the school is a safe place for them, a haven against abuses perpetrated elsewhere. Sadly, this is not the case.

Although the research is located in Zimbabwe, similar patterns of abuse are likely to be found in schools in many parts of the world, given that its causes stem primarily from the patriarchal and authoritarian nature of the society in which the school is located.

This is a one-year study funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). Its overall aim is to increase the very limited knowledge of the nature of the abuse of girls within the school environment in sub-Saharan Africa and to outline strategies which can help counteract this abuse. It is intended as an exploratory study that will hopefully lead to a larger and more comprehensive piece of research covering a number of countries. In particular, it seeks to:

a. investigate the nature and pattern of abuse of girls in the identified schools, whether this relates to sexual abuse or harassment, rape, physical abuse, psychological or emotional abuse such as bullying and verbal taunts;

b. make an analysis of the school curriculum and informal school practices which either contribute to or confront the existence of abuse in schools;

c. examine ways in which the schools have responded to reported incidents and complaints of abuse and the nature of any action taken against abusers;

d. recommend strategies for confronting and reducing the incidence of abuse in schools.

1.2 Definition and scope of abuse in this study

We have deliberately adopted a broad definition of abuse to cover both **sexual** and **non-sexual** forms. Relevant definitions are to be found in studies of child abuse in the West. In this context, a child is legally anyone from birth to the age of 18, although

those in the 12-18 age group are usually referred to as adolescents. Most studies of child abuse in a Western context are studies of the **sexual** abuse of children. Two definitions of particular relevance to our study are included here.

> Sexual activities are [.....] abusive if a person with greater power, due to age, physique, status, understanding or knowledge, takes advantage of another person's vulnerability, fears, weaknesses, lack of understanding, helplessness or need (Doyle 1994, p 8).

> Sexual abuse is the involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children or adolescents in sexual activities they do not truly comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent or that violate the sexual taboos of family roles (Kempe and Kempe 1978, cited in Search 1988, p 5).

The terms 'power', 'status', 'informed consent' and 'dependent' are particularly significant here. And, while the second definition refers specifically to family-based abuse, the notion of 'taboo' clearly also applies to teachers having sexual relations with their pupils.

Given that we are concerned here with the abuse of adolescents rather than children under the age of 12,[1] definitions of sexual harassment, a term usually associated with adult victims, e.g. students in higher education and employees in the workplace, are also helpful in developing our understanding of the issue. The following was used by the Gender Equity Task Team in South Africa in its recent development of a gender equity policy for the new government and is based on Australian anti-discrimination legislation of 1991. This defines sexual harassment as follows:

> When a person subjects another person to an unsolicited act of physical intimacy; makes an unsolicited demand or request (whether directly or by implication) for sexual favours from the other person; or makes a remark with sexual connotations relating to the other person; or engages in any other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature in relation to the other person, and the person engaging in the conduct does so with the intention of offending, humiliating or intimidating the other person; or in circumstances where a reasonable person would have anticipated a possibility that the other person would be offended, humiliated or intimidated by the conduct.
>
> (Wolpe et al 1997, p 217)

Because the context that we are researching is one where one party exercises power over another and where the victim is an adolescent who may not fully comprehend what a sexual relationship entails, we have considered the term 'harassment' as relevant but too weak. 'Abuse' is the legal term applied to children (including adolescents) who are taken advantage of by an adult (and sometimes by another child) by virtue of his/her superior power and for his/her own benefit or gratification. We

[1] This study has targeted the junior secondary level; however, abuse also exists at the primary level and involves children under the age of 12 (see footnote 5).

have therefore used the term 'abuse' to broadly describe the behaviour documented in this study, while restricting the term 'harassment' to denote a 'milder' albeit all-pervasive form of abusive behaviour.

We interpreted **sexual abuse** as any kind of abuse which has a sexual dimension, so physical, verbal, and what is often loosely called psychological or emotional abuse could all be covered. In the context of this study, sexual abuse is perpetrated by male teachers, boys and (in the proximity of the school) older men. Particularly important in this research is the fact that the abuser is usually misleading the abused (e.g. making promises of marriage) to lure the girl into a sexual relationship.

When we started to look at abuse in the four schools chosen as case studies, we found that sexual abuse was perpetrated not only by teachers but also by older male pupils in the school. The shocking case of the mass rape by a gang of schoolboys of 75 schoolgirls and the death of 19 more in a Kenyan secondary school in 1991 first brought this issue to international attention. Sexual abuse by male pupils therefore became a major feature of the study, alongside that of male teachers. In addition, we did not wish to isolate sexual abuse within the school from its broader context - that of the gendered society - and so we also included abuse experienced by girls in the proximity of the school, e.g. on their way to and from school. This was abuse by older men (often called 'sugar daddies'[2]) and male adolescents.

Alongside sexual abuse, we included **physical non-sexual abuse** because physical violence is rife in Zimbabwean schools and there is evidence that the two types of abuse are linked.[3] Physical abuse is perpetrated primarily by teachers in the form of corporal punishment, but also by pupils (e.g. beating or bullying by either boys or girls). Corporal punishment is banned by the Ministry of Education in Zimbabwe except when administered on boys by the head teacher in the presence of another teacher and with a written record being made of the incident. However, its use on girls as well as boys is widespread, and by female teachers as well as male. An environment which tolerates the illegal use of corporal punishment is one which is likely to be equally permissive of other forms of violence, including sexual abuse. Indeed the two are linked, e.g. a girl who grants sexual favours to a teacher will normally avoid being beaten, whereas a girl who has turned a teacher down might risk being singled out for beating. Male teachers may even get sexual gratification from beating girls (beating being a recognised form of sexual abuse, Doyle 1994, p 26).

We are conscious that the above definitions of abuse originate in a Western context and that other cultures may define abuse differently, especially where initiation rights are concerned (Korbin 1981). However, in classifying as 'abuse' corporal punishment and offensive language as used by teachers, aggressive behaviour and language as used by boys, and sexual advances by male teachers, pupils and strangers, we feel confident

[2] This is a term applied to adult men who lure girls into a sexual relationship with money and gifts. The risk of HIV infection has led to an increase in the sugar daddy phenomenon, as men perceive schoolgirls to be usually virgins.

[3] Verbal abuse was also widespread in the school, and was used by female teachers as well as male, by boys and to a certain extent by girls. It has been categorised as sexual abuse for the purpose of this study because of its strong sexual overtones designed to denigrate the female sex (see page 11).

that they can all justifiably be labelled in this way because they rely on a power relationship in which one party (the girl here) is victimised. Indeed, feminists have not been slow to point out that (sexual) abuse is the most striking example of the exploitation and use of women and children by men in a patriarchal society. In the case of corporal punishment used by teachers, moreover, we are referring to illegal acts. And in the case of sexual advances, we are referring to potential criminal offences, given that the legal age for sex in Zimbabwe is 16 years, and most of the girls in the study were under that age.

It was decided not to try to include bullying of a non-sexual nature in the study, firstly because it would have broadened the field work requirements excessively and secondly because much of the bullying had a sexual dimension to it and therefore was already covered by our study. Nor could we cover the abuse of boys by teachers, sexual or otherwise, since this was not the purpose of the study. Although the abuse of boys is acknowledged and some instances are documented in this report, most reported cases of school-based abuse concern girls and this has to be considered the most urgent area to investigate. In addition, domestic abuse of girls, while not identified as an area of investigation initially, was talked about by girls in a number of interviews. Our research strategy therefore allowed us in broad terms to document the links between **abuse in schools** and **abuse in the home and in public places**.

To summarise, in this study abuse is defined as **sexual** (whether physical, verbal, psychological or emotional) and **non-sexual** (corporal punishment). The former is perpetrated by boys, male teachers and, in the proximity of the school, older men and male adolescents. The latter is perpetrated by male and female teachers. Verbal abuse, although perpetrated by female teachers as well as male teachers and boys (and sometimes girls), is considered under the category of sexual abuse, as explained in footnote 3. It should however be borne in mind that in the schools studied it was as widespread as physical abuse (corporal punishment) and, as with the latter, was directed at boys as well as at girls.

2. THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

The research was carried out in four government junior secondary schools in one region of Zimbabwe. Three were co-educational schools and one a single-sex school. Two schools were in rural locations (one in an agricultural area and the other a mining area), one was a peri-urban school and the fourth an elite all-girls' school in an urban setting. Two schools had female heads and two male heads. The original study was to last one year, but this was extended by a further four months to allow a number of workshops to take place. The interview-based field work was undertaken between October 1998 and July 1999, and the workshops were run in October 1999 and January 2000.

The field work consisted mainly of in-depth interviews using largely open-ended questions. These interviews were conducted with girls in Forms 1-3 in the four schools in three rounds: the first round with 112 girls, the second with 73 girls, and the third with 17 girls. In addition, interviews were held with 59 boys in Forms 1-3 in the three co-educational schools, 23 teachers (11 male and 12 female) drawn from the four schools, three head teachers and one deputy head, and 37 parents. We also interviewed four officials from the regional office of the Ministry of Education, the Director of the regional Ministry of Social Welfare and the police officer responsible for the Victim Friendly Court system in the area. (see **Appendix 1** for interview numbers).

Girls were selected for the initial round from a number of Form 1-3 classes where they were asked to write about a problem they had at school and to indicate whether they wished to be interviewed. Those who showed a willingness to write frankly and in detail about their problems, whether with boys, their family or their studies, were usually chosen. This is therefore not a strictly representative sample; however, it is safe to say that, although the selection process is likely to have missed pupils who had little to say about personal experiences of abuse (and therefore we could be accused of exaggerating its severity by selective sampling), it has also missed those who had a lot to say but did not wish to talk about it for fear of being reported. Indeed, we failed to find any girl who admitted to a sexual relationship with a teacher in the school and yet we had evidence that in all three co-educational schools, this was going on.

Given the absence of other detailed research studies and the sensitive nature of the topic, we decided to approach the interviews with girls somewhat cautiously and to rely on progressive focusing. The desire to take a broad perspective to the problem of school-based abuse and to link it up to other forms of abuse of women and girls in society also supported such an approach. The first interview questions revolved around problems that girls experienced in and around the school and only gradually moved to the issue of abuse by male pupils, older men and finally male teachers, this latter being the most difficult area to tackle. From these first answers, a number of girls who had something of substance to say were selected for follow up interviews. A third set of interviews was added at the final stage for those girls who said they had been subject to sexual advances by male teachers, or who had friends who had been, to explore the circumstances surrounding this.

The girls' ages ranged from 13 to 17 with the average age of the total sample being 14.5 years. 22 girls were in Form 1, 64 in Form 2 and 26 in Form 3. Over half the girls

interviewed therefore came from Form 2, the 14-15 age group[4]. This age group was focused on because it is at this stage (during Forms 2 and 3) that many girls drop out (see **Appendix 2, table 1** figures for the three mixed schools). Form 1 girls were included in the sample because these early experiences of junior secondary school are critical to their future, both in educational and personal terms. It is also at this stage that their understanding of, and views on, female and male sexuality develop rapidly[5]. As will be seen, the school culture emerges as not at all conducive to the development of mature relationships between male and female pupils.

The workshops were designed to explore further the problem of abuse in the schools identified in the one-to-one interviews and to elicit suggestions from pupils and teachers as to appropriate strategies to address the problem. Detailed accounts of the workshops with female and male pupils, held in October 1999, and those held with teachers in January 2000, are provided in **Appendices 5 and 6**.

2.1 The background to each school

School A is located near a small mining community of approximately 10,000 inhabitants surrounded by forest plantations and about 20 kilometres from the nearest large town. Its economy revolves around mining and agriculture. In addition to the long-term employees of the mining companies, there is a large transient population engaged in casual gold panning. Prostitution is high, in part because gold panning injects the local economy with a certain amount of loose cash and in part because male workers are often without their families. There were also Russian and Chinese contract workers employed on local development schemes. This situation presents a risk to girls from men tempting them into a sexual relationship with offers of cash and gifts.

17 girls in our sample of 32 (58%) live with only one biological parent or with relatives (**Appendix 2, table 2**). We were told that some girls attending the school live unsupervised in rented accommodation. Gold panning opportunities mean that the average household is economically better off than those sending their children to School B (agricultural) or School C (peri-urban). There is also a higher awareness among the adult population of the risks and causes of HIV/AIDS because of company-provided healthcare and health education programmes. It is likely therefore that the HIV/AIDS rate of infection is slightly lower than elsewhere. However, the higher level of awareness among adult men may make schoolgirls even more vulnerable to their attention as they attempt to avoid infection.

12 girls in the sample (38%) travel five kilometres or more to school. The school comprises 730 pupils, of whom 312 are girls and 418 boys. The average age of the 32 girls interviewed in Round 1 was 15.3, somewhat older than the other three samples. The school head is male and comes from the local community. There are 13 female

[4] 22 girls in the whole sample were at least one year older than the average form age.

[5] Sexual abuse is known to be widespread in primary schools among much younger children. One head teacher told us that it was more prevalent in the upper classes of primary than in secondary. The regional Ministry cited a recent case of a teacher accused of what is officially termed 'improper association' with a 10 year old schoolgirl.

teachers, of whom nine are married, and 17 male teachers, of whom 14 are married. The school has running water, pit latrines and electricity, but the latter only in the administration block and workshops. Eight male teachers, of whom seven are married, live in teacher housing nearby.

All but one girl in the sample said that she was engaged in daily household chores before or after school, the average being 2-3 hours per day. 12 out of the 32 girls said that they were not satisfied or not completely satisfied with their families' support for their basic needs (defined as food, uniform, school books, school fees, bus fares and pocket money) and 10 said that they regularly went hungry (**table 2**).

School B is located on the outskirts of a small rural community with an approximate population of 6000. The school lies on the main road between two major towns. The local economy is primarily subsistence agriculture, sometimes with a male adult in the household holding an office job in the nearby regional capital which is 40 kilometres away. This community is more stable than that of school A. However, 14 girls in the sample of 20 (70%) are living with only one parent (usually the mother) or with grandparents or other relatives (**table 2**). The school's location on a major road exposes the girls to sexual advances from truck drivers and drivers of private vehicles, especially as some girls apparently live 15 kilometres or more from the school (none included in our sample). Some seek lifts to and from school, especially if their families are unable to provide them with money for bus fares.

The school is on the outskirts of the village. It comprises 510 pupils, of whom 235 girls and 275 boys. The average age of the 20 girls interviewed in Round 1 was 14.9. There are 12 female teachers, of whom 11 are married, and 12 male teachers, of whom six are married. 10 teachers, all male, live in teacher housing on the school site; six of them are married and four are single. The other teachers commute daily from their homes. Of the 24 teachers, five are student teachers, four male and one female. Three of these male student teachers are married and live unaccompanied by their families in the teacher housing. The school has running water and pit latrines but no electricity.

All the girls in the sample said that they carried out domestic chores either before or after school, with the average being 2-3 hours per day. 17 out of the 20 girls said they were not at all satisfied or not completely satisfied with their families' support for their basic needs, and nine girls said they regularly went hungry. These figures for deprivation are proportionately higher than in School A (**table 2**).

School C is located in the peri-urban high-density area surrounding the regional capital. It is one of several junior secondary schools serving a population of approximately 200,000. Its working population comprises street vendors, shop assistants, council and factory workers and some government employees. There is also much cross-border contraband trade with Mozambique. There is a high rate of prostitution and HIV/AIDS infection and a high incidence of rape. The national Victim Friendly Court initiative, which supports child victims of rape and facilitates the criminal prosecution of the perpetrators, has one of its officers based in the local police station. 23 girls in the sample of 37 (68%) are living with only one parent or with other relatives. Housing is very crowded, with large families sometimes living in only two rooms. This density encourages physical and sexual abuse.

The school operates on a double shift system and its physical facilities in terms of classrooms, desks and chairs are insufficient for the number of pupils. There are 1123 pupils in total, comprising 604 girls and 519 boys[6]. The average age of the 37 girls interviewed in Round 1 was 14.1 (lower than in Schools A and B, because 19 of these girls were d[illegible] from Form 1). There are 28 female teachers, of whom 24 are married, two divorced and two widowed, and 20 male, of whom 17 are married and three single. The school has running water, electricity and both pit latrines and (for staff) flushing toilets.

All 37 girls in the sample said that they engage in daily household chores, with the average being 2-3 hours per day, as in the other schools. 21 girls were not satisfied or not completely satisfied with the provision of their basic needs and eight said they sometimes went hungry. These figures show that a relatively high number of girls are dissatisfied with what their families provide but a smaller number go hungry than in Schools A and B (**table 2**).

School D is located in the centre of town and is an all-girls' elite school. It takes pupils from Forms 1 to 6 (unlike the other schools which terminate at Form 4). Approximately one-third of the girls are termly boarders. Most girls come from homes with professional or business backgrounds. In nearly half the sample of 23 girls, both parents are working, mostly in full-time employment. Most girls consider that all their basic needs, including pocket money, are met. Although a higher number are living with both biological parents, and probably in a more stable family unit than girls in the other schools, a significant number (ten girls or 43%) are living with only one biological parent or with relatives.

Although the girls in this school study in a more protected single-sex environment, the proximity of the school to the commercial centre of town exposes them to sexual advances and assaults by male strangers, e.g. as they are waiting at the bus stop or walking through the market. Some girls travel to school from the outskirts of town on public transport, which makes them prey to unsolicited attention from male drivers and passengers. This suggests that placing girls in a single sex school does not completely protect them from sexual exploitation by men.[7]

The school has 760 pupils, of whom 640 are in Forms 1-4; the remaining 120 are in Forms 5 and 6, this being the senior secondary level and not covered by this study. The average age of the sample is 13.8 (all of them in Form 2). There are 20 female teachers, of whom 16 are married, and 12 male, of whom eight are married. This is the only school where the ban on corporal punishment is strictly enforced but other punishments such as detention and manual work on the school premises are common. The school has electricity, water, flushing toilets and many more facilities and resources than the other schools.

[6] According to the head teacher, the higher figure for girls' enrolment is explained by parents choosing to send their sons to a better school or to a boarding school if they have the means, while sending daughters to the less well regarded school with lower fees.

[7] It was even reported that boarders frequently contravened the school rules and went out at night without permission to attend night clubs and bars.

Only one of the 23 girls said they did not do domestic work at all; all the boarders said they did some during the vacations. Of the day girls, 1-3 hours was usual but not necessarily every day. Their domestic duties are therefore considerably less than those in the other schools. Four girls were not satisfied or not completely satisfied with provision of their basic needs and two said they sometimes went hungry (**table 2**). Therefore, although the majority of girls in the sample from this school are obviously better provided for, there are still a few cases of poverty.

In summary, the pupil sample is striking in that over half the girls do not live in a nuclear family and are living with only one biological parent or with relatives. Many experience significant poverty (26% do not have enough to eat) and most engage in daily domestic labour.

2.2 The school setting

Junior secondary schooling in Zimbabwe lasts for four years and culminates in GCE 'O' level exams. It follows seven years of primary schooling and, for those who continue further, there are two years of senior secondary schooling, leading to GCE 'A' levels. All lessons except *Shona* (a national language) are given in English. Alongside the traditional academic subjects, a weekly lesson in 'Guidance and Counselling' has been introduced, designed to help pupils prepare for adult life. This uses a syllabus developed by the Curriculum Development Unit of the Ministry of Education and covers topics such as puberty, sexuality and sexual health, and drug abuse. Since 1996 schools have been supplied with materials entitled 'Think About It!' prepared with assistance from UNICEF which seek to educate pupils in Forms 1-4 about the risks of AIDS. Many schools operate a weekly after-school Anti-AIDS Club, which is run by teachers using material provided by the Ministry of Health and assisted by resource persons from outside the school.

One teacher in each school is made responsible for coordinating the teaching of Guidance and Counselling. These heads of department are supposed to attend training workshops provided by the regional Ministry of Education so that they can train others in the school to teach the subject. Both male and female teachers are encouraged to teach it. However, out of the four schools studied, only one has a male head of Guidance and Counselling. As will be shown, this programme is not effectively taught.

Compared to schools in other African countries, these are relatively well resourced. All teaching takes place in proper classrooms, although sometimes the number of desks and chairs are insufficient. Books are in short supply, with approximately one book for every three pupils in urban schools and one for every five pupils in rural schools. The Curriculum Development Unit of the central Ministry provides a range of visual aids (posters, charts etc) but delivery of these to schools is problematic. Although physical space may be constrained, every school has a staff room and some teachers have their own offices. School C in the high density area operates a double shift system and is clearly overcrowded, although some new classrooms were being built during the field work period (thus exposing the girls to the additional hazard of sexual advances from builders).

Pupils are expected to attend school every day and to arrive punctually. Lateness is punished, with form prefects writing down the names of latecomers, who will be punished at the end of the week, usually by being given manual labour. In some classrooms pupils sit according to friendship (usually boys and girls separately) but in others the teacher arranges them and may mix boys and girls together. Most secondary schools have a tuck shop, where pupils can buy drinks, snacks and sweets during break and lunch time. Sometimes pupils bring items in for sale to other pupils. As the research shows, the presence of the tuck shop is an important element in the development of male-female relationships and potentially abusive behaviour.

Movement to and from the school during the day is not strictly monitored, so that pupils often 'bunk' lessons after the register has been taken and may in some cases come and go during the day. Girls from the single sex school meet boys from the nearby elite boys' school in the town as they go to and from school or at lunchtime. In all the schools, the lax control of pupil movement facilitates the development of relationships between boys and girls, and also fosters suspicions about the sexual activities of certain pupils who miss lessons or alternatively (in the mixed schools) stay on after the end of the school day on some pretext or another.

Corporal punishment, although banned by the Ministry of Education in Zimbabwe in almost all circumstances, is widespread, and is usually administered with a thick stick or belt. Apart from beating, teachers pulling pupils' ears or hair is common. Other punishments given by teachers are: standing outside the classroom, detention, sweeping the classroom, cutting grass, weeding, watering, digging, carrying bricks or stones, picking up litter and cleaning the toilets. Punishments are given for arriving late, missing lessons, fighting, making a noise in class, not doing homework, insubordination, not listening to the teacher's instructions, ignoring other punishments and failing to answer questions in class.

Verbal abuse, as already indicated, is also widely used. Pupils are called names such as 'good for nothing', 'lazy bastard', (the *Shona* equivalent of) 'scumbag', 'you pig', 'you dog' and 'baboon'. Expressions such as 'bullshit' and 'I'll beat you shitless' were said to be used frequently. While some sex-specific terms of abuse were directed at boys, teachers' abusive language towards girls appeared to be more sexually explicit and offensive. Girls were called 'whores' and 'prostitutes' and accused of only thinking of boys. Examples provided by girls of abusive language used by male teachers towards them included 'you prostitute, you think I'll propose to you', 'you think I'll sleep with you like your boys do' and 'you think I'm here to touch your breasts'. As already explained, because of the sexually demeaning intentions of the language used, this has been included under the category of sexual abuse.

2.3 Sexual activity within the school

The research revealed a school environment rich in sexual or sex-oriented activity. Much of it was no different from what one would expect in any co-educational secondary school in any country. Although sexual activity was very limited within the all-girls' school, for obvious reasons, there was evidence of a great deal of interest in and discussion of sexual matters here too, and much sex-oriented activity taking place outside the school.

In the mixed schools, this activity in its more extreme forms constituted abuse in that it entailed unsolicited and intimidating male behaviour which continually violated the girls' private space and not infrequently led to sexual assault. This was perpetrated by boys in the school aggressively forcing themselves on girls' attention and by teachers making sexual advances towards girls. This is a common phenomenon in Zimbabwe as well as in an unknown number of other countries, even though it is a disciplinary and in some cases a criminal offence.[8] Even the girls in the all-girls' school were not totally protected from sexual advances by male teachers. In the schools studied, such abusive behaviour by male teachers and pupils was institutionalised, an ingrained part of the school culture, and for the large majority of girls an unwanted part of their daily lives. The reasons why male behaviour in and around the school goes beyond the acceptable to the abusive are explored in this study.

In all four schools, it was clear that there was much interest in the opposite sex by both boys and girls. However, the extent to which pupils engaged in full sexual relations was less clear. Among the girls, most were uncertain as to whether those whom they said had boyfriends were having sex or not. Those who said they had boyfriends did not in most cases admit to having a sexual relationship. The vast majority of girls thought that many girls in the school, even in Form 1, had boyfriends but it is an indication of the culture in Zimbabwe that one does not talk about personal matters, and especially about sexual matters, even with close friends. However, some girls did volunteer the names of couples having sex and there were several reports of recent incidents (some taking place during the research period) where boys and girls from the school were allegedly found in the sex act in or near the school. In one school, accounts were given by various girls of a girl allegedly found in the school library having sex with the head boy, of a Form 3 girl found with a schoolboy in the sex act in the forest by women collecting firewood, of another couple found having sex in the graveyard and a Form 2 girl found to be sleeping with an ex-student at the local army barracks. In another school, several girls mentioned an incident in which two girls had disappeared over a weekend with lorry drivers and their absence had only come to light when their parents came to the school to report them missing. Many girls and some teachers stated that they often saw couples taking secluded paths away from the school into the nearby maize fields and mountains. In the all-girls' school, a very high number of girls in the sample reported that girls in their form had sexual relationships, usually with sugar daddies.

The incidence of schoolgirl pregnancy was high in all four schools, with only six girls in the Round 2 sample of 73 claiming not to know of at least one girl in the school who had become pregnant and dropped out recently, although they often did not know who the father was. Numerous girls claimed to know girls who had had illegal abortions. Head teachers reported that girls just stop coming to school (as is shown in table 1) and it was assumed that in most cases this was due to pregnancy – rather than

[8] In the UK, a bill proposing to make it a criminal offence for teachers and social workers to have sexual relationships with children in their care, even if they are over the age of consent (16 years), is being debated in the current session of parliament. If it becomes law, it is estimated that 10-15 teachers a year could face prosecution and a possible two year jail sentence for 'abuse of trust' (The Guardian, 18 September 1999).

problems over payment of fees, which is often given as the reason for girls dropping out.

The fact that most of the girls interviewed were not ready to talk freely about their own sexual activities and were uncertain about those of others made it very difficult to obtain a true picture of how sexual relationships developed and to determine whether girls entered freely into them or whether they were coerced. In addition, some of the girls were considerably older than their classmates (e.g. age 16 or 17 in Form 2) and it must be assumed that they were more able to enter into such a relationship knowingly and to manage it with some maturity.

At the same time as being exposed and/or subjected to abuse, there was evidence that not all the girls were passive victims of unsolicited male attention, even by teachers. This contradicts the way in which the sexual exploitation of girls by male teachers is usually portrayed in the media. It was clear that some girls respond positively to advances by boys and a few to advances by male teachers (and may even encourage them) and that some girls enter into relationships with teachers voluntarily. Likewise with sugar daddies. There is also evidence that girls will claim to have been raped so as to oblige the man to marry them, especially if they are pregnant or do not want to reveal that they entered the relationship voluntarily.[9] Parents may even encourage such liaisons, as in rural areas in particular a male single teacher with his government salary and housing is considered a desirable 'catch'. Teachers also confirmed that some girls are attracted by the idea of having a relationship with a teacher. A sexual relationship with an older man (sugar daddy) may also not be frowned upon, especially if he can provide adequately for the girl. The research therefore found that the distinction between an abusive and a consensual relationship is often blurred, and that within an abusive relationship (as must **always** be the case between teachers and schoolgirls according to our definition of abuse) it is not at all clear whether it was entered into by the girl willingly or by coercion. This inevitably makes the task of gathering and interpreting data more complicated. However, it does not change the fact that any relationship, whether with a teacher, a sugar daddy or a male pupil, is abusive if it exploits the relative powerlessness of girls (or any other vulnerable individual) for the benefit or gratification of the more powerful party.

One striking feature of the interviews was that on the whole the interviewee, whether a girl, a boy or a teacher, would be happy to talk openly (and usually disapprovingly) about the sexual behaviour of others. They were much less willing to talk about such behaviour in terms of themselves. It was remarkable that among the teachers interviewed, those who were the most explicit and informative about sexual abuse in the school were the male teachers **who were themselves named most frequently as abusers** by both male and female pupils. In one case, one of the worst offenders was happy to name another teacher as being guilty of having affairs with girls in the school. In contrast, the female teachers were reluctant either to acknowledge or to talk about sexual abuse by male teachers, and were unable to give detailed examples of the ways

[9] Rosemary Gordon of the University of Zimbabwe, who has acted in an advisory capacity on this study, told us of an interview she held with a girl who claimed to have been repeatedly 'raped' by her boyfriend. However, it transpired that social conventions which frown on sex outside marriage had made her reluctant to admit that she had sex with her boyfriend voluntarily.

in which male teachers approached girls as some of their male colleagues were able to do (some obviously speaking from direct experience).

Cases of teachers, and in particular head teachers, having sexual relations with their pupils have attracted some media attention in Zimbabwe and elsewhere. There is no doubting the severity of the offence and the adverse impact on girls' lives. Such teacher-pupil relationships must always be termed abusive. There was evidence to suggest that the teachers' advances towards some girls unsettled and distracted the whole group, affected their concentration in class and made some fearful of drawing attention to themselves if they participated too much in lessons. Most importantly, it passed on the message to boys that such male behaviour was acceptable. The fact that teachers pursued sexual liaisons with girls with impunity made the older boys not only bolder and more aggressive in their behaviour towards girls but also increased their contempt for them, as is revealed in the boys' interviews. This aggressive and abusive behaviour from older boys, which prevented girls from studying in a safe and supportive environment, has been largely ignored in the media in its limited debate on sexual abuse in schools; yet in many ways it represents a greater daily threat to girls than teachers' sexual advances.

Abusive behaviour followed a similar pattern with boys and teachers in the three mixed schools (and to a very limited extent with male teachers in the all-girls' school). The girls from all four schools also reported similar experiences with male adults and adolescents outside the school. However, the form the abuse took was different with each group of perpetrators. For the purpose of this report, these groups are divided into: **boys in the school, male teachers in the school** and **adult men outside the school** (mainly sugar daddies but also male adolescents, often unemployed or ex-pupils). Figures for those interviewed are given in **Appendix** 1. The nature of the abuse as perpetrated by each group is detailed in the following pages. Statistical data refer to the Round 2 interviews with 73 girls, which provided most of the information about incidents of abusive behaviour, unless otherwise stated. On the whole, the girls' account of what happened in and around the school was corroborated by the other groups interviewed.

The analysis starts with an account of the main findings (**section 3**) from the girls' interviews (documenting abusive behaviour by **boys, teachers** and **male adults and adolescents**). This is followed by findings from the interviews with **boys, teachers and head teachers, parents** and **government officials. Section 4** contains a discussion of these findings, followed by recommendations in **section 5** to address abuse in schools.

3. THE FINDINGS

3.1 Interviews with girls

These interviews, held over three rounds (**Appendix 1**) revealed that girls were harassed and abused by male pupils in the three co-educational schools, by teachers inside the four schools (mainly verbally in the case of School D) and by male strangers (usually 'sugar daddies') in the vicinity of the school.

With regard to **boys** in the co-educational schools, two types of abusive behaviour dominated.[10] The first arose from the highly developed ritual of older boys from Form 4, and to a lesser extent Form 3, making sexual advances or 'proposing to' the new girls in Form 1. There was clear peer pressure on boys to obtain girlfriends and to boast about conquests among the younger girls. These proposals were made either directly, in person, or through the writing of love letters or notes, usually sent via a friend but sometimes by post. Most girls in the schools (81 percent of the Round 2 sample of 73 girls) said that they had received love letters, and a few had taken boyfriends in this way. However, most claimed to be irritated by this practice, tore the letters up and tried to ignore the boys. The older boys would also enter the Form 1 classrooms uninvited during the break times, usually in groups of three or four, with the intention of forcing the girls to talk to them and to respond to their advances. The girls clearly found this very intimidating. Boys also accosted girls on their way to and from school, in the school grounds, during sports events, and also near their homes. Sometimes, boys' advances were accompanied by small gifts of money, or a boy might buy a girl a drink or a snack during break time. Although couched in romantic language, the proposals clearly contained an implicit request for a sexual relationship. Abuse in the form of threatening or violent behaviour arose when girls turned down these proposals. They would use sexually explicit language to embarrass and humiliate the girl, threaten to beat her up after school and in some cases would strike her. A boy would be particularly abusive if a girl had accepted a gift or money.

Although not exposed to such abuse within the school, girls who attended the all-girls' school would be approached by boys from the boys' school in town or in their neighbourhood, and surprisingly there was as much activity around sending and receiving love letters for these girls as in the co-educational schools.

The second form of abusive behaviour by boys in the mixed schools occurred when clusters of boys intimidated or assaulted the girls physically or verbally without warning, as if in an affirmation of male dominance over females within or near the school grounds. They would attempt to touch girls provocatively or shout obscenities at them. 34 girls in the Round 2 sample (47 percent) reported that they had experienced unsolicited physical contact from boys in the school. Examples cited were: boys grabbing or pinching their breasts or buttocks, pulling them, twisting their arm, blocking their way, and in a few cases beating or hitting them (sometimes more than

[10] Many of these findings echo those uncovered during a three-day workshop in 1997 with adolescents attending a secondary school in Mashonaland East which explored adolescent boys' and girls' views of their own sexual and reproductive health (Kaim et al 1997).

one boy at a time). In the school in the peri-urban area, girls reported that they had to run a gauntlet of boys waiting to ambush them as they left school; they would try to pinch their breasts or lock them in a physical embrace, while other boys would look on and laugh. Some reported having had textbooks or exercise books stolen by boys who entered their classroom. A number of girls also talked of boys showing condoms to girls and speaking about them provocatively, e.g. offering them as sweets. During biology lessons, boys also used sexually explicit language and drawings to embarrass girls.

Very few of the girls thought that the boys were serious when they made individual advances. Most considered them as merely competing with each other for the most girls' attention and boasting to their friends about their sexual conquests. The great majority of girls claimed to be irritated, embarrassed, confused, and in some cases frightened, by this unsolicited attention from boys. They talked of loss of concentration in class, crying after a particularly unpleasant incident and feeling anxious and bothered, especially when meeting the boy(s) who had assaulted them. Some Form 1 girls reported that they were too frightened to leave the classroom at lunch and break times. The girls developed strategies to deal with the boys' aggressive behaviour, for example always walking home with other girls, moving around the school together and avoiding passing near a crowd of boys.

At the same time, it was reported that some girls boasted about the attention they received from boys and showed off that they had money to buy snacks, sweets and drinks from the tuck shop - money given to them by boys to tempt them into a sexual relationship. We learnt that there was considerable prestige attached to having pocket money to spend during break times, and girls who had money were admired and popular. In School A most noticeably there were a number of boys who insisted that some girls would initiate contact by writing letters to boys or approaching them directly.

Nevertheless, it was clear that the school was not a conducive environment for forming mature and lasting relationships. Most girls saw boys as predatory and vengeful and very few had formed a stable relationship with a boy from the school. The high number of intimidating incidents and assaults documented suggests that boys infringe the girls' personal space with impunity. They appear to feel not just entitled to intimidate and assault them, but **obliged** to by peer pressure. The boys themselves see the girls as fair game, especially as they consider them primarily interested in money.

The passive acceptance of the situation by most of the girls is indicative of their implicit recognition of the superior power and status accorded to males by society. Very few took retaliatory action; most appeared to be resigned to such incidents and made conscious attempts to avoid confrontation. They also had little faith in their teachers and thought that either they did not notice what was going on or they did not care. While the girls in the all-girls' school were protected from such behaviour on the school premises, they were still exposed to abusive behaviour by men and boys when they went into town or to their homes.

There was some evidence that the aggressive behaviour of boys puts pressure on younger girls to take a boyfriend as protector. This could have negative consequences

for other girls. As one girl said, each time you do something wrong to a girl with a boyfriend in the school, older boys threaten to beat you because they claim you are harassing 'their woman' – a situation confirmed by one teacher. Girls use this protection to consolidate their position in their own class and vis-à-vis other girls.

Abuse by teachers consisted of beatings, which the girls spoke bitterly about, and sexual advances by male teachers (what they called 'proposals'). They were reluctant to talk about these for fear that what they said would be repeated to the teachers, who were suspected of passing what was told them in confidence around the staff room for the amusement of other teachers. Although only 14 girls out of 73 admitted to being propositioned by a teacher, the majority knew of other girls who had been approached, and some named girls (including some in our sample who denied it) whom they suspected of having an affair with the teacher. This suggests that the figure of those who had been approached was higher than that reported. Moreover, the interviews revealed that the teachers usually made advances to older Form 4 girls who were not included in our sample. The fact that even a few younger girls in Forms 1 and 2 had been targeted is indicative of how widespread the practice is and how teachers go about it with no fear of being reported and disciplined.

Being the target of an individual 'proposal' was in addition to male teachers taking the opportunity of daily close physical contact with the girls. For example, a teacher might put his arm round a girl in class on the pretext of reading her exercise book in class or pretend to admire a girl's T-shirt while touching her on the breasts. Some of the circumstances under which girls said they were approached are provided in **Appendix 3a**. Even though not all these overtures can be considered as constituting a direct request for sex, the approach was made in such a sexually explicit way and was such a common occurrence that the teacher's intention was quite unambiguous to the girls. Teachers pursued their amorous activities mainly during sports, but were also quite open about it in the classroom so that boys and other girls would whistle or hiss if a teacher called on a particular girl known to be of interest to him to read out loud or to come to the front of the class.

The girls who had been approached said that they felt embarrassed, shy, ashamed, miserable, insulted or scared when the teacher involved taught them in class. They tried not to attract his attention. They were also worried that by refusing the teacher they would expose themselves to retaliation, such as being given low marks, being beating in class or made to do extra tasks or school work. None reported it to the school head or to the Guidance and Counselling teacher. At the same time, none admitted responding positively to these advances.

While it is difficult to separate hard facts from rumours and conjecture, there was an accumulation of evidence provided not only by girls, but also by boys and some teachers that there were teachers having affairs with girls in their schools. Examples of what girls said to support these claims are given in **Appendix 3b**. Moreover, a number of girls claimed to know of girls who had been made pregnant by a teacher (and in several cases had had an abortion), or of teachers who had been found in the sex act on the school premises. One girl said her older sister had been raped by a headmaster in another school and had a young child by him. Another girl said she had learnt from her

aunt that her father had been a teacher who had got her mother pregnant when she was in Form 4.

There were some girls who claimed that there were a few girls who responded positively and even boasted about the sexual advances made to them by teachers (**Appendix 3c**). Some girls who had been interviewed were named by others as having responded positively. The consensus was that a girl would enter a sexual relationship with a teacher primarily for money and that teachers would tempt girls with offers of money and snacks in the same way as boys and sugar daddies did. However, there was also the suggestion that a girl might do this to be favoured, to feel important and made to feel special, or even to boast about it to other girls. Some knew of well-off girls who went out with teachers. So, poverty was not the only factor. The boys in contrast saw the girls as exclusively motivated by money. All, both boys and girls, said they disapproved strongly of such relationships, because they felt that the teacher would favour the girl in class and in exams unfairly, he might be distracted from his teaching, the girl might get pregnant, and they were setting a bad example. Only eight girls in the whole sample thought that it might be acceptable under certain circumstances, e.g. he might be genuinely in love with her and want to marry her. As suggested, however, it may be the case that not all girls were revealing their true attitudes when they spoke disapprovingly of such liaisons.

As for abuse by **male adults and adolescents,** an astonishing 103 out of the 112 girls (92%) said they had been propositioned by adult men. These were usually prospective 'sugar daddies' who tried to engage them in conversation, offered them lifts, money or presents, or said they wanted to marry them, with a view to tempting them into a sexual relationship. These encounters usually took place on their way to or from school, when they went shopping or to church, and near their homes, and was as common in the rural areas as in the town. In some cases, it was neighbours or relatives who approached them and pestered them, usually promising to divorce their wives and marry them. For those who walked to school along main roads, truck drivers were the main aggressors; in town it was taxi and minibus drivers, as well as drivers of private cars. In one school, where some new classrooms were being built, workmen pestered the girls (and one girl became pregnant by one of these workmen during the field work period). Girls in all the schools were harassed by unemployed youths, ex-pupils, boys from other schools, agricultural labourers and, in the case of School A, gold panners. For the few girls who worked on a family stall in the market after school, there was the risk of being harassed or assaulted by men who frequented the nearby beer halls.

In addition to being propositioned, girls were frequently assaulted by male strangers in public places for no reason apart from the fact that they were female (just as older boys assaulted them in the school). It was shocking to learn that over half the total sample in the first round of interviews of 112 girls had experienced unsolicited physical contact or assault from strange men, usually at the bus stop or while walking home. Thirteen girls said they had had their breasts grabbed or pinched and seven had been touched on the buttocks. Others had had their arms pulled or twisted, or their hand gripped. In some cases, a drunken man had tried to hug a girl, and men often squeezed up against them on public transport. Sometimes, adolescent boys accosted them in an aggressive manner; one girl had been hit by a local boy with a stick at the bus stop, another was harassed with her friends at the bus stop by a group of boys who would take their

food, try to make them talk to them and throw stones at them if they did not. On the whole, the girls were more frightened of boys who accosted them outside the school than by those inside. Some were said to be drunk or high on marijuana; they were rougher, used verbal abuse more frequently and moved about in gangs. However, once in the school the girls were not necessarily protected from boys outside; cases were reported of boys driving cars right into the school grounds or walking up to a classroom to wait for a girl (in some cases to beat her). Just as the movement of pupils in and out of the school was lax, so was there no monitoring of outsiders coming into the school.

Few girls took retaliatory action when faced with threatening behaviour or assault from either boys or men. Some had shouted at the man who had assaulted them but only one tried to hit him and two to push him away. They said they were usually too scared to retaliate for fear of being subjected to further violence. Some girls cried after particularly unpleasant experiences; several spoke of feeling violated or dirty, of being treated like a prostitute.

Despite almost universal disapproval of girls who had developed sexual relationships with sugar daddies, many of those interviewed (54 girls or 74%) said they knew of girls who had sugar daddies and some claimed to know many such girls. These figures were surprisingly high in the case of the girls' school, which suggests that poverty is not the only factor in tempting girls into relationships with older men. No girl interviewed admitted to such a relationship but girls were named in some cases and precise details provided of when and where they had been seen with the man. Some girls were said to come to school with plenty of money to buy snacks; others were collected from the school gates in their cars or were seen in town with men, often in cars. However, only a few girls thought that it was acceptable if the man was unmarried. The others said the girls were ruining their lives, nobody would marry them and they may catch sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS; the men were just exploiting them and would drop them as soon as they got tired of them. They all thought the girls did this for money, but a few thought they might also do it for fun, to experiment or to show off.

It is widely acknowledged that in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, the high incidence of HIV/AIDS has encouraged the practice of older men seeking out schoolgirls for sex in the expectation that they would be virgins and free of the HIV virus. Although this practice has existed for some time, it has increased dramatically, with men often waiting outside school gates to engage girls in conversation as they leave, or following them to and from school. Teachers we spoke to were of the opinion that girls entered into conversation, accepted small gifts and perhaps took rides in cars with strange men without realising that they would be forced into sex with them at a later date. This appeared to be the same approach taken by teachers. Poverty in a girl's family would encourage her to accept gifts of money from men, whether known or unknown. Given the reluctance of men to use condoms, the threat to the girl's life is real, especially as it is known that the highest rate of HIV infection in

Africa is now in the 15-19 female age group).[11] Indeed, it is estimated that for every boy in the same age group who is infected by the AIDS virus in Zimbabwe, there are six girls; a similar pattern is to be found across Africa (verbal communication, Director, Family AIDS Counselling Trust, 1999). The Zimbabwe government has launched vigorous public campaigns to alert the population to the AIDS pandemic and to warn girls of the dangers of having sugar daddies.

All the girls, and the boys, appeared to understand clearly the risks of HIV/AIDS infection; yet they almost all thought the girl entered into the relationship with a teacher or a sugar daddy voluntarily. However, the power relationship between the adult man, whether a teacher or a sugar daddy, and the adolescent girl, means that the girl does not enter into a relationship of equals. Social acceptance of male 'superiority', the difference in age, physical strength and economic status are all factors that constrain the girl's degree of volition. By taking advantage of her circumstances, whether in terms of poverty, age, immaturity or vulnerability due to family difficulties, the man is abusing her. If she is under the age of 16, he is also committing a criminal offence. In the case of a teacher, moreover, whatever the age of the girl, if she is his pupil he is engaging in an illegal relationship.

3.2 Interviews with boys

On the whole, the boys in the three mixed schools were even less open than the girls in admitting their own involvement in sexual activities in the school, especially in harassing or abusive behaviour towards girls. Although they acknowledged that girls can present a problem to boys, they saw girls as being more affected by issues of boyfriends (being too interested in boys, being proposed to or harassed by boys) than boys were by girls. At least for the benefit of the researchers, they formulated their own problems in terms of absent teachers, shortage of textbooks, learning difficulties and poor concentration in class rather than in terms of girls. Only eight boys, all of them in School A, admitted to having a girlfriend, despite the fact that some boys interviewed were named by other boys (and sometimes girls) as having girlfriends. And only 18 boys (most in School A again) admitted that they had written love notes to girls. Both these figures are at odds with the much higher numbers of girls who claimed to have received such notes.

At the same time, the interviews revealed how important making proposals to girls was to the boys and the status they attached to having a girlfriend. The boys were very ready to talk about how boys in general would approach girls (**Appendix 3d**) and the majority of boys confirmed the girls' picture of boys competing among themselves. It seemed that the more confident boys approached a girl directly, the less confident would write a letter but then 'some girls will think you are shy and stupid'. Sometimes they would send a friend 'to test the waters'. Proposing to a girl appeared to be a necessary adolescent ritual, and for some, once having got a girlfriend, he would not want to lose her because, as one boy said, 'proposing is so laborious'. For others it was a game to see how many girls they could conquer.

[11] Latest statistics from WHO/UNAIDS indicate that in the countries of Southern Africa (including Zimbabwe) between a quarter and one-fifth of the sexually active population (15-49 years) are infected with the HIV virus (SafAIDS 1999).

Regardless of their attitude towards this ritual, the boys' uniform contempt for the girls was clear. They all thought they were interested in men only for money, and hence preferred older men to boys. One boy summed up the male perception of the relationship well by saying 'Boys want sex, girls want money'. One boy admitted that he was keeping a record of how much he had given a girl (20 Z$ to date, approximately 30 pence) so that if she ditched him he would demand his money back! Nevertheless, many boys apparently spent all their pocket money on girls, took odd jobs at weekends to earn money for girls, and in some cases were reported to steal from parents and relatives. Because of this, some were of the opinion that boys made considerable sacrifices to obtain girlfriends, even though most of them thought girls were the more serious about such relationships.

However, most of the boys denied, or sought to downplay, the girls' claims that they used threatening behaviour and language towards them. Only 19 boys (32 percent) of those interviewed admitted that (other) boys sometimes use threatening behaviour towards girls. Interestingly, most of those who were ready to talk about this were Form 1 boys, who were less likely to be engaged in such behaviour, and who were themselves often subjected to bullying by older boys. Some confirmed the girls' account of older boys entering the classroom during break times, pestering girls and threatening a girl if she rejected him. This was particularly the case if he had given her money, as she would be seen as 'trying to make a fool of him'. Examples of such behaviour were: boys threatening to beat a girl on the way home, using older brothers to threaten a girl into submission, snatching her bag, jostling her, bringing objects like rubber snakes into class to frighten her, calling her names like 'prostitute' and 'dog'. Two boys cited incidents of boys beating girls after being turned down. One boy said some boys smoked *dagga* (marijuana) before approaching girls.

At the same time as largely denying the use of threatening behaviour, a very small number of boys (six in all, four of them from School A) insisted that sometimes it was girls who initiated a sexual advance both towards boys and teachers (**Appendix 3e**). A boy in School B said he had received a letter from a girl; he had replied stating he was not in love with her and placed the letter in her exercise book. A small number of girls in the Round 3 interviews also seemed to suggest that girls might initiate the advance.

As for teachers having affairs with schoolgirls, nearly half the sample said they knew of teachers in the school doing this and 21 named one or more particular teachers. In one school, one teacher was named seven times, in another six times. Two boys claimed to have found a certain teacher having sex with a Form 4 girl in his office after school had finished for the day. Those teachers named by boys were the same as those named most frequently by the girls. When talking about this, the boys showed even more contempt for the teachers than for the girls. However, their condemnation arose more from a sense that the teachers were competitors with an unfair advantage in the procurement of girls than from a sense of moral outrage.

3.3 Interviews with teachers and head teachers

23 teachers were interviewed, of whom 12 were female and 11 male. They included three teachers responsible for Guidance and Counselling (of whom one was male). The

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head teachers of three of the four schools, and the deputy head of one (in the absence of the head on leave) were also interviewed.

The teachers largely confirmed the picture presented by the girls and the boys, even suggesting that both groups had understated their involvement in sexual activities. The majority thought that preoccupations with boys distracted girls from their studies, more so than boys' preoccupation with girls. This was mainly because they thought girls were more vulnerable emotionally and their performance declined easily when they became involved with boys. As one teacher from the all-girls' school said 'They drown in love affairs'. They also agreed that girls were more likely to be exposed to abusive behaviour than boys, with particular risks of sexual assault from lorry drivers, taxi drivers and male strangers for girls who have to wait at bus stops, pass near beer halls or walk long distances along lonely paths.

As for aggressive behaviour by **boys** in the school towards girls, the teachers in the mixed schools appeared, contrary to what the girls had said, to know very well what was going on, and probably knew more than their head teachers. They all acknowledged that boys threatened and sometimes pushed and beat girls, especially older boys younger girls if the latter refused their proposals. They also confirmed that girls were too frightened to report older boys. They knew that boys wrote letters to girls, showed them condoms and attempted to 'fondle' their breasts. At times girls were bullied and beaten by other girls who were protective of their boyfriends.

The teachers also acknowledged that the way in which girls had been socialised to be obedient and passive made them less able to retaliate and therefore easy targets of male aggression. Family and societal structures favour boys, so girls tend to get blamed and punished more often for their shortcomings, especially by fathers. In addition, most teachers thought girls were on the whole more affected by the break up of the family, emotional neglect and poverty (boys can more easily find casual paid work). While they all thought that girls were as intelligent as boys, most thought girls did not always possess the necessary attitude or effort to excel, and lacked confidence in their own potential.

In the mixed schools, the teachers also thought that the experience of being an orphan, staying with relatives, lack of family support, living a long way from the school and excessive time spent on domestic chores, were additional factors which affected their studies. In the all-girls' school, where the majority of girls came from middle-class backgrounds, the early pre-occupation with boys (in some cases starting at primary school), peer pressure to have a boyfriend and an excessive interest in and competitiveness over material possessions e.g. having new clothes, smart hairstyles, make up, polished nails etc. were seen as particularly disruptive influences - although lack of parental support was also an important factor. Girls were known to fight over boys. One teacher said that men considered it prestigious to be attached to girls from the school and some of the older girls were known to frequent the town's main hotel – one had been expelled recently for going out with a married local businessman.

Most of the teachers (13 out of 17) defended the use of **corporal punishment** as the only way of ensuring discipline and did not see it as physical abuse. In the three mixed schools, they recognised that almost all teachers, both female and male, used it

regularly, as did parents at home. Some saw it as essential in circumstances where male pupils were known to threaten teachers (in School C in particular where the local peri-urban community was characterised as violent). In the all-girls' school, where the ban was strictly enforced, teachers compensated by using verbal abuse. Two of the four teachers (two female, two male) who said they disapproved of corporal punishment were from the all-girls' school and they disapproved not so much for moral or ethical reasons but because they knew it was banned. Most also acknowledged that teachers used abusive language towards pupils, although there was some suggestion that female teachers used it more than male teachers because they were afraid to beat male pupils. Some said male teachers used suggestive language, or sometimes insulting or 'foul' language, to attract girls. In one school a female teacher was accused of using racist language towards pupils.

They were, however, much less forthcoming when it came to the incidence of (**physical**) **sexual abuse** in their schools. While some were ready to accept that male pupils might behave in an abusive manner towards girls, only four teachers (three male teachers and one female student teacher) acknowledged openly that teachers sexually abused girls. Interestingly, one of these male teachers was a teacher who was himself frequently named as making sexual advances to girls. He talked of male teachers being motivated by 'pure lust and abuse' and confirmed that their sexual approaches mostly took place during sports activities. He referred disapprovingly to two teachers (both of whom he named) whom he had overheard commenting to some Form 1 girls who had changed into their sports kits along the lines of 'You look very attractive. I wish you could stay in those tights all the time'. He also mentioned a third teacher who 'has the habit of patting girls' bums during sports'. The other teachers said that perpetrators were mostly student teachers or young teachers. Female teachers were noticeable for their reluctance to recognise that such abuse took place, although it must have been difficult for them not to notice it.[12] The three head teachers admitted there had been cases of teachers having sexual relationships with girls (and in one case this had got into the regional press), and the heads of Schools A and B knew of girls who had become pregnant by teachers, but these cases had been in the past.

Very few of the teachers said they knew of cases where a teacher had made a schoolgirl pregnant, and these were usually in other schools.[13] In School B a girl had recently entered Form 4 having transferred from another school where she had been made pregnant by a teacher.[14] The Guidance and Counselling teacher in the same school had found out recently that a student teacher was having an affair with a Form 2 girl and feared that she was pregnant. One teacher referred to a head master in her

[12] Three female teachers from one school later admitted at the teachers' workshop in January that some girls had approached them complaining about teachers propositioning them.

[13] Information from the regional Ministry however confirms that there are many cases (see 3.5. below).

[14] The government policy is for girls to be allowed to enter another school after having given birth. There is little evidence however of this happening on a regular basis. Either schools are reluctant to take teenage mothers for fear of them being a bad influence on other girls, or parents do not wish to invest further in the education of a daughter who has a child.

previous school who had got a girl pregnant and been dismissed, another to a teacher who had made three girls pregnant at the same time and was dismissed.

In all four schools, a few teachers were ready to admit that there were cases of teachers propositioning girls in their school, rumoured or known. In one case, the head knew that a teacher had been propositioning girls but said that no girl had wanted to make an official complaint. The teacher was later transferred but not dismissed from teaching. Even in the single-sex school, there were rumours about two teachers being too intimate with pupils.

When asked about **school policies**, most agreed with the policy of dismissing a teacher or expelling a male pupil who gets a girl pregnant, but acknowledged that it is not always enforced because of lack of evidence. One teacher said the girl's parents sometimes ask the head teacher not to report the case because they are negotiating for the boy or the teacher to marry the girl. It appeared that teachers often trick the parents into believing that they will marry her but then secretly arrange a transfer. At the same time, however, most teachers did not see that there was a problem of inadequate enforcement of the policy in their school. In the light of the evidence produced by this study and the acknowledgement from the regional Ministry of the weaknesses in enforcement (see 3.5 below), this reveals a high level of complacency among teachers.

Likewise, they all thought that the curriculum adequately addressed the question of abuse through the Guidance and Counselling lessons and the Education for Living programme (which head teachers were supposed to teach in assemblies and staff development sessions), although they acknowledged that Guidance and Counselling was not taken very seriously because it was not an examinable subject. Most said they taught lessons on the dangers of sugar daddies, sexual and physical abuse, sexual health etc. either during Guidance and Counselling or normal lessons.

The complacency of the system as a whole (or the teachers' reluctance to admit the problem to the researcher) was reinforced by the limited evidence given by teachers of official complaints being made against a teacher or pupil for abuse or harassment. Very few teachers knew of any cases apart from those involving excessive beating by teachers and harassment by boys. Only four teachers mentioned specific complaints having been made, e.g. one of a teacher 'fondling' a girl's breasts, another two cases of teachers harassing a girl and a teacher accused of using offensive language in class, but nothing more. And no disciplinary action seemed to have been taken.

Despite being reluctant to admit that sexual abuse by teachers went on, a small majority acknowledged that certain aspects of the school organisation encouraged abusive behaviour. Those aspects cited included: the excessive use of manual labour and detention and, in the co-educational schools, excessive corporal punishment; the unchecked harassment of girls by boys; the lack of enforcement of rules and lax monitoring of pupils; teachers' derogatory attitudes towards girls, not listening to their problems, humiliating them with jokes of a sexual nature and using verbal abuse. Two female teachers thought male teachers belittled girls through their inappropriate behaviour and language; however, the research revealed that female teachers had equally negative attitudes towards girls.

3.4 Interviews with parents

37 parents and guardians of girls in the three mixed schools were interviewed. One mother interviewed from each school talked of an older daughter who had become pregnant while at school and dropped out.

The parents and guardians, like the teachers, thought that on the whole girls had more problems to contend with at school than boys, in particular the risk of pregnancy. Girls had to bear the consequences of this while boys escaped from their responsibility. Only six parents thought that boys had an equal share of problems (drinking, drugs, high unemployment, thieving, peer pressure to become 'wild'). Most parents also thought that girls were more affected by family circumstances: parents squabbling and using bad language to each other; loose morals among parents, with mothers perhaps bringing boyfriends home or fathers girlfriends; break up of the family; lack of parental control; harsher treatment of girls than boys, especially from fathers, and being shouted at more. Parents' higher expectations of girls' behaviour meant that they got punished more when they failed to live up to these and fathers' preference for boys' education also demoralised girls. Excessive domestic work for girls prevented them from concentrating on their studies, while boys got off lightly.

At the same time as sympathising with girls, however, the majority of parents/guardians portrayed girls as weak in character, unable to resist temptations and excessively influenced by their peers and what they saw on TV and in films. They did not pay attention to their parents or respect them sufficiently. In particular, they expressed concern about the materialistic culture which surrounds young people; girls' desire for money and luxury items combined with poverty drives them into sexual relationships. Peer pressure encourages them to have affairs so as to impress others; they think they are adults. Girls were also considered deceitful because they may pretend to their parents that they are going to school but in reality they are going elsewhere to meet a boy.

Not surprisingly, given this perception of girls as weak and confused, many parents/guardians, like the teachers, the boys and the girls themselves, saw girls as largely to blame for their own problems. A third of the sample thought the girl should solely be to blame if she got pregnant, and some also thought she should be severely punished. They were surprisingly harsh in their views on this. Suggested punishments included: being 'made to suffer', beaten, sent to the man's home, sent to stay with relatives in the rural areas, or even sent to jail. One said 'she should be beaten but not killed'. One of the women who had had a pregnant daughter said she had chased her daughter from the home when she had discovered she was pregnant but fortunately the man had married her. Many did however think that the girl should be allowed to return to school after the baby was born, although some said that most fathers would refuse to allow this and others that she would be a bad influence on the other girls. One mother said she would not pay her daughter's fees in such circumstances.

In light of their harsh views, it is perhaps not surprising that parents/guardians admitted that girls did not talk openly to them about their problems or about incidents

with men or boys. Less than a third said that the girl had spoken to them about a problem of harassment or bullying. Many wished the girls would confide in them but acknowledged that they feared being reprimanded. Incidents that they were told about included: two girls being beaten by boys because they had turned down a boy's proposal (in one case the aunt went to the police and the boy was fined 200 Z$ - £4), girls being harassed or threatened by boys or men on their way to and from school, a girl claiming that another girl had stolen her book (the parents decided not to pursue it for fear of the accused girl bullying their daughter). Several parents said that they saw their daughters being followed and whistled at by boys, which worried them. In one case the mother said her daughter had received two letters from married men who attended their local church; one letter contained a 50 Z$ note. She told her daughter to return the letter and the money to the man.

At the same time, parents or guardians made little attempt to talk to the girls about their problems or about sexual matters, in part they said for fear of encouraging them. Some thought the high incidence of teenage pregnancy was the result of too much discussion about sex (at school and in the media) and the free availability of condoms. They disapproved of the teaching of health education at school because it included sex education. This is a particularly unfortunate attitude given the high prevalence of HIV infection among adolescent girls.

There was also little acknowledgement of their own parental responsibility (and their failure) in addressing girls' problems. Instead, they expected the school to do this, to teach pupils about morality and to enforce moral behaviour. Most thought that it was failing in this; only School B received some praise. Some parents had no idea what the school might be doing, others thought that teachers saw what was happening every day but did nothing. Clearly they had a poor opinion of teachers: some thought they were the main problem: many were drunk or divorced, too many were very young, and female teachers, who should be talking more to girls, were too busy fighting over boyfriends themselves! In some cases they may be jealous of the girls. Some female teachers may themselves have experienced early pregnancy and therefore have nothing exemplary to teach the girls.

Very few parents/guardians knew of specific cases of teachers having affairs with schoolgirls. They themselves did not address the subject, as we were convinced their girls did not engage in such behaviour. Several said girls chose to hide this information from parents either to protect each other or for fear of being reprimanded. However, a few said they had heard rumours of both single and married teachers having affairs with schoolgirls, either in the girl's school or elsewhere, and of teachers threatening girls if they did not have sex with them. They confirmed what some teachers had said, that parents may not wish to report the case because if the teacher is dismissed he will not be able to support the girl; they therefore prefer to make a family settlement.

The majority thought schools did not do enough to protect girls and suggested improvements. Some thought girls should not be allowed out of the school yard and the register should be taken several times a day. The school should be stricter with both teachers and pupils, and there should be better communication between parents and teachers. Older women in the community should be invited to talk to girls. Several parents would like girls to be taught only by female teachers or in single sex schools or

boarding schools. One mother pointed out that three girls had already dropped out of her daughter's form this year as a result of pregnancy. Many blamed the Ministry for transferring teachers to locations where they could not take their families, which encourages them to form sexual liaisons with girls. Two (one an uncle) thought girls should be checked regularly in the clinic to see 'that they are not sexually active', i.e. that they are still virgins. The uncle suggested that if found to be pregnant, a girl should be shamed in front of the whole school. Two parents would like pupils to be beaten more.

The parents themselves were reluctant to complain (only 11 had done so at some time on matters such as a child being excessively beaten by a teacher). They thought the school did not care and nothing would be done. They also did not want the child to be victimised. Many said they would like to complain about a wide range of issues such as teacher absenteeism and laziness, e.g. teaching lessons of only 10 minutes or so, lack of teachers in some subjects, lack of discipline and pupils coming home late. They would also like to be invited to the school and to be more involved in the education of their children. It is interesting to note in this respect that the heads complained that very few parents attend meetings when they are held. However, many parents were keen to be interviewed by the researcher; the impression gained was that parents are talked at by heads in meetings and reprimanded not consulted. If asked to genuinely participate, they might be more willing.

3.5 Interviews with government officials

Four officials from the regional office of the Ministry of Education were interviewed: the regional director, the deputy regional director and two education officers, one being the administrative officer and the other a gender officer involved in a Sida supported gender programme aimed at training education officers and school heads in gender awareness. Despite repeated attempts by the principal researcher, the education officer responsible for Guidance and Counselling could not be interviewed. In addition, the Director of the regional office of the Ministry of Social Welfare and the police officer responsible for the Victim Friendly Court system in the region were interviewed.

The education officers confirmed the high incidence of what is referred to as 'improper association' by male teachers in schools in the region. One officer defined this as referring to sexual relationships between a teacher and a pupil and including fondling of the girl's body, the use of insulting language, asking a pupil to cook, fetch water, clean the teacher's house or do errands not associated with meaningful learning. They also confirmed that such incidents of improper association were on the increase. In the previous two months 11 cases had been reported, one involving a 13 year old and another a 10 year old girl. However, they were dealt with very slowly and in the region there was a backlog of five years in investigating and dealing with such cases. There were for 1999 already 15 recommended cases for dismissal, which were currently awaiting the approval of the central Ministry.

The administrative officer referred to several recent cases, one of a schoolgirl made pregnant by a teacher, another of a teacher caught in the sex act with a schoolgirl by other pupils who reported it to the head teacher; the teacher tried to negotiate with the

parents to marry the girl but they had already filed their complaint. He confirmed that teachers often try to negotiate to marry the girl while secretly arranging a transfer to another school. It is after the teacher has left that parents come to the regional office to complain. The office usually traces the teacher and charges him if appropriate. He also referred to a recent case of a teacher who had transferred from another region where he had had an affair with a girl; within a term, he was accused of the same offence in his new school. Parents are now becoming wise to the teachers' attempts to evade them and are coming forward more frequently to make an official complaint.

The deputy regional director, interviewed towards the end of the field work period, said that there had been two dismissals the previous month (October) and, although far short of what was required, it was a step in the right direction. It gave a strong warning to those who engage in such malpractice. He acknowledged that there were also groups (NGOs, women's groups) who were now lobbying for stiffer sentences and the Ministry could now no longer ignore complaints when they were received, from whatever source; all were investigated.

Cases are reported to the regional office of the Ministry either through the head teacher or through anonymous letters from teachers, pupils or parents. In some cases, the headmaster is the guilty party and so teachers and pupils report it directly to the Ministry (and some of the most high profile cases to reach the media are those involving head teachers). Circulars are sent to all secondary schools about improper association and the consequences at the start of each school year but heads often do not discuss the matter with their staff. The issue is also addressed during meetings of heads at the regional and national level and the Ministry also liaises with the training colleges on this.

Those interviewed laid the blame very much on the teachers and heads: many go into teaching as a last resort because of high unemployment and not because they are committed to the profession. School heads are lax, some do not know their schools well and sometimes do not even know the names of all their teachers. Heads are supposed to counsel and guide teachers, especially the young and those with personal problems, but this does not happen. Some heads themselves are most noticeable for inappropriate behaviour and this makes it extremely difficult to stamp out sexual relations between teachers and pupils. Teachers are often drunk. As the director said, there is 'much decay in the moral fabric of the school' and improper behaviour goes unchecked.

The officer responsible for the Victim Friendly Court initiative in the region[15], which facilitates the prosecution of rapists of children under 12 years of age and provides support and counselling to the victims, said that he was currently engaged in a series of visits to all primary schools in the area to talk to pupils and parents about child abuse and the counselling facilities available. He gave them information as to what to do in the case of suspected rape, regardless of who the perpetrator might be. Suggestion boxes were also placed at the police station, so that people could report suspected rape

[15] In 1997, when the initiative had started with DANIDA support, 20-25 cases had been reported to the regional office and in 1998 there had been 48, 22 of of which had resulted in convictions over the nine month period.

cases anonymously. He was strongly in favour of teachers tackling the issue openly within the school and for counselling to be included in teacher training so that teachers could help child victims in their schools.

The director of the regional Ministry of Social Welfare confirmed that head teachers and teachers are reluctant to report cases of sexual abuse in their schools but since the establishment of the Child Welfare Forum parents raise the issue at village committee meetings. What was being revealed about abuse of children in rural areas was only 'the tip of the iceberg'. She argued for better co-ordination between the bodies involved with children: schools, police, ministries, health services, for parents to talk more to their children and for teachers to be more accessible.

4. DISCUSSION

This study examined the incidence of schoolgirl abuse by boys, teachers and older men (mostly 'sugar daddies') in and around four schools in one region of Zimbabwe. We did not investigate the abuse of boys, although we know that physical abuse of boys is commonplace both at school (as corporal punishment and bullying) and at home (as physical violence and sometimes sexual abuse). Nor did we investigate whether any of the boys interviewed were being sexually abused by male teachers at the school, nor whether any female teachers in the schools had made sexual advances to male pupils, as this was not part of our study.[16]

By linking the abuse of girls in school to that in the home and community, it was clear that their abuse is part of the wider mistreatment and exploitation of females and is a direct consequence of the low status accorded women in a highly gendered society. Zimbabwe is not exceptional in this respect.

This section discusses the main findings of the study, using a slightly modified form of the original research questions to organise the analysis.

4.1 What is the nature and pattern of the abuse of girls in each of these schools?

As the above analysis has shown, abuse took a number of forms, covering for the purpose of this study physical non-sexual abuse (corporal punishment) and sexual abuse.

Physical abuse as corporal punishment was practised on a daily basis by almost all teachers in the three mixed schools, against the directive of the Ministry of Education, and by two of the head teachers (one male, one female). It was administered regularly to girls as well as boys despite the Ministry directive that girls should not be caned. Beatings took the form of hitting with a thick stick or a strap (frequently an old car fan belt), a blackboard eraser or the hand. Beatings were administered to the palm of the pupil's hand, the knuckles or finger tips, the back, legs or buttocks. Pupils were also slapped on the face and on the back of the neck. In one school, girls reported that the teacher would also pull out tufts of their hair and place it on their desks in front of them; for that reason they kept their hair very short.

The interviews revealed that most teachers, parents and pupils did not see corporal punishment as abuse unless it was excessive. However, both the girls and the boys felt extremely bitter about the physical punishments meted out on them regularly, especially for small offences.

Sexual abuse in the schools took a number of forms:

[16] However, we did receive detailed information from one boy about a married female teacher in his school making sexual advances to a Sixth Form boy in another school. The researcher also knew of two cases where volunteer female teachers from overseas had had affairs with Form 4 boys in local schools – and in one case she had married the boy and had three children.

- verbal abuse, e.g. teachers or boys using sexually explicit language designed to embarrass, demean or humiliate girls, in the classroom, the school grounds and the sports fields, outside the school gates and on the way to and from school; it was also used to some extent between girls (and between boys)
- physical abuse of a sexual nature, e.g. an older boy, teacher or other male adult touching a girl in an unsolicited act, molesting or assaulting a girl, or making inappropriate sexual advances[17]
- emotional abuse, e.g. a boy, teacher or other male adult intentionally leading a girl into an emotionally dependent relationship under false pretences (usually promising to marry her) to suit his own ends
- psychological abuse, e.g. a boy threatening to wait for a girl after school to beat her up or to rape her if she turned him down, a teacher leading a girl to believe he might retaliate if he is turned down.

Many of the incidents of a sexual nature reported by the girls formed a continuous and institutionalised harassment which, because it exploited the difference of power between the perpetrator and the victim, has to be regarded as abusive behaviour. Even where it was of a relatively mild form, the fact that nobody sought to control and punish it meant that it had the potential to rapidly become serious abuse. For example, a teacher who is attracted by a girl can clearly exploit his position of power to force her to have sex with him by threatening to beat her for faults in class (to avoid being beaten was one reason given by girls as to why a girl might enter a sexual relationship with a teacher) or to fail her in her exams (although it was not clear to what extent this happened, girls were aware of the possibility). A boy can pick on a girl who has annoyed him by organising his gang to assault her physically (we heard of a few occurrences of boys, singly or in gangs, hitting girls).

In the three mixed schools, the type and pattern of sexual abuse was similar, as explained in the previous sections. However, abuse by boys seemed to be greater in the peri-urban school, with much evidence of general bullying, of younger boys as well as of younger girls by older boys. **Boys** would threaten and intimidate girls on a daily basis by going into the classrooms of the younger pupils during break time, accosting them in the corridors and grounds, trying to touch them on the breasts or buttocks, waiting for them in gangs after school and behaving and speaking in class in a manner intended to demean or humiliate them. If they wished to 'punish' a girl, they could wait for her after school hours outside the school gates or corner her during sports, when there was less surveillance from teachers, or take advantage of teachers being in the staff room to hit her. Pupils and teachers alike saw such behaviour as an inevitable and 'natural' part of daily life, and as it was regarded as routine, nobody sought to change it. For girls in the single-sex school, there was the possibility of abusive behaviour by boys from the nearby all-boys' school (as well as by sugar daddies and male strangers).

As for sexual abuse by **teachers** in the mixed schools, there was plenty of evidence of male teachers exploiting their position of authority and failing in their duty of care by propositioning girls for sex. Although some of this evidence was circumstantial, it

[17] No incidents of rape were reported in these schools, although girls knew of several incidents in the locality and several rape victims were reported to be pupils in the schools.

came from different sources and was sufficient to confirm that in all three mixed schools some teachers were having sexual relations with girls while propositioning others on a wide scale. It was not clear how many there might be in each school. In one of the mixed schools, girls named three teachers who had propositioned them and were known to have affairs with schoolgirls while the boys named two teachers whom they suspected of having affairs; in another, girls named four teachers who propositioned girls and boys named eight teachers whom they suspected of having affairs. Some teachers were said to be 'notorious' for this. In the third mixed school, two teachers were named by girls, one of whom had made a girl pregnant the previous year (he was no longer there) and in the single-sex school one teacher was named. Even if the number engaging in abuse of this nature is only two or three per school, this would indicate that the practice was very common.

Also not clear was the extent to which a teacher might have used force to coerce a girl into a relationship, especially as there was evidence that some girls encouraged advances by teachers. A teacher had plenty of opportunities to make such advances, as we have seen. Some made them on the sports field, where they were not observed by other teachers. Others used suggestive language openly during lessons, where such behaviour was considered routine. Other strategies used by teachers were: asking a girl to stay behind after class, to come to his office or to carry his books. A girl would find it difficult to ignore such an instruction. Some heads of department had their own offices and most teachers had a small 'base room', often at one end of the classroom, where they kept books and materials. It was therefore possible even during class for a teacher to see a girl on her own in the base room. More opportunities were available after school hours, especially for teachers who lived in teacher housing, as was the case with Schools A and B. Teachers who live in town are in a hurry to leave at the end of the day, even the school head, so nobody notices whether pupils or teachers remain. A pupil may remain at school totally unsupervised, or if questioned may claim to be attending an after-school club. Only the janitor is there to lock up. As the girls in the rural schools also pointed out, there are plenty of shady paths and maize fields where pupils and teachers can go, largely unobserved.

Male pupils and teachers crowding in on girls' private space, trying to get close to them so as to touch them provocatively, speaking to them in sexually explicit and insulting terms, as well as male pupils threatening them and beating them up are manifestations of the school as a **site of sexual violence** for girls. Verbal abuse by teachers was another manifestation of such violence. There was some evidence that it was used more frequently towards girls and was specifically designed to denigrate and humiliate the female sex.

Another manifestation of school-based violence was of course the prevalence of **corporal punishment** in the three mixed schools, despite its being banned. All but four girls in the sample (and all but two of the boys, both of whom were in Form 1) from these schools had been beaten at least once by a teacher (**Appendix 2, table 6**). Some had been beaten 20 or more times. Interestingly, in School B nine female teachers as compared to three male teachers were named by girls as having beaten them. Overall, the pupils thought male teachers beat the most and boys were beaten most often, but there was still a significant number of girls who thought female teachers gave beatings in equal measure and that girls were beaten as much as boys. 14

girls thought female teachers beat more (**table 6**). In the all-girls' school, where the ban on corporal punishment was strictly enforced, some girls had been heavily beaten at primary school. It was also obvious that **bullying** of a less explicitly sexual nature took place and was directed at both girls and boys. Examples were cited of pupils being teased because of their appearance or because they stammered; names being written on toilet walls; younger boys (and in some cases younger girls in the all-girls' school) being made to 'fag' and run errands for older boys (or girls). However, this study was unable to research this aspect.

Abuse in schools reflected abuse and violence **in the home**. It was likely that a number of girls had experienced sexual abuse by relatives or neighbours. There were two or possibly three cases of girls in the sample who had either been raped or were at great risk of being raped (and they were offered counselling by the researchers). One girl was made to sleep in the same room as male workers, two of whom had tried to have sex with her, as had also an uncle who was visiting. Another girl was living with an aunt who was clearly a prostitute; together with her cousin, she was required to arrange visiting times for the aunt's clients and to tell arriving clients when the aunt was 'busy'. The girl had woken up one morning to find one of the aunt's clients in her bed. One girl who was ill-treated at home said she had attempted suicide. Several girls referred to other girls they knew (one a Form 1 girl in the school) who had been raped, sometimes by male relatives.

Other forms of abuse in the home were beatings, excessive domestic labour demands, neglect (lack of love, attention and respect), verbal abuse consisting of insulting comments and expletives intended to humiliate the girl, usually by fathers but sometimes also by mothers. Some girls were beaten by mothers as well as fathers, or by a relative.

It was disturbing to find that such ill-treatment at home was widespread. In some cases, this had encouraged girls to consider taking a boyfriend at school so as to gain protection, support, or the love and attention they did not find at home. To such girls, marriage would appear as the only long-term solution. Hence, one consequence of ill-treatment and abuse at home was that girls might be more responsive to some boys' or adult men's attention than they would otherwise have been, and hence vulnerable to exploitation.

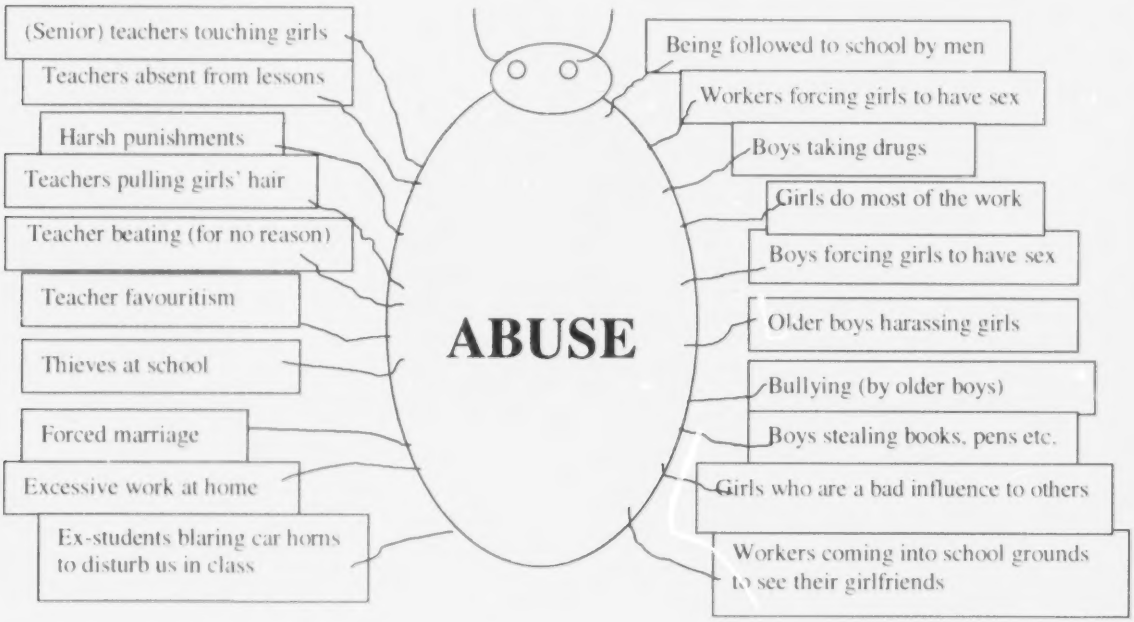
Outside the home, in the proximity of the school, girls were exposed to harassment and abuse in public places, e.g. at bus stops and in market places, on the road to and from school, near the home and while travelling on public transport. It is important to note that girls in the all-girls' school were not protected from such forms of abuse; indeed, the location of the school in the town centre made them particularly at risk.

4.2 To what extent are the perceptions of abuse held by teachers, pupils and other educational personnel at variance with our definition (as given in section 1.1)?

The 17 teachers were given a checklist of ten items and invited to identify those which they classified as abuse (see **Appendix 4**). They all classified situations in which male

teachers, male pupils and men outside the school demanded sexual favours or physical intimacy of girls as abusive. Likewise, bullying, verbal abuse, expressing negative attitudes about girls' behaviour, intelligence and commitment to study, threats from male teachers whose sexual advances are rejected by a girl were all classified as abuse. However, there were mixed opinions as to whether corporal punishment constituted abuse. 13 teachers said they agreed with its use as a form of discipline and 12 teachers thought it only counted as abuse if given in excess. Making girls clean a classroom or do additional chores in the school was also not considered abuse but an acceptable form of 'socialisation' into adult roles. Both boys and girls in Zimbabwean schools are required to carry out such manual tasks according to a roster, although girls reported that some boys tried to get them to do it in their place.

Girls were also able to identify many types of abuse in their school, as shown in the spider diagram below. However, what constituted abuse was not always clearcut. In the family context, the girls were much clearer about this, so that sexual advances by a male relative, beating and other ill-treatment by a parent or relative, excessive domestic


(Senior) teachers touching girls
Teachers absent from lessons
Harsh punishments
Teachers pulling girls' hair
Teacher beating (for no reason)
Teacher favouritism
Thieves at school
Forced marriage
Excessive work at home
Ex-students blaring car horns to disturb us in class
ABUSE
Being followed to school by men
Workers forcing girls to have sex
Boys taking drugs
Girls do most of the work
Boys forcing girls to have sex
Older boys harassing girls
Bullying (by older boys)
Boys stealing books, pens etc.
Girls who are a bad influence to others
Workers coming into school grounds to see their girlfriends

Girls' perceptions of abuse (combined groups) School A

duties and extreme neglect were all forms of abuse. However, they were less clear about this in the school context. With regard to corporal punishment, although they were bitter about the beatings they received, 43 girls (38%) thought it was acceptable, at least if given in moderation and for a justifiable reason (**table 6**). More importantly, the girls' attitude towards sexual advances by male teachers and pupils was ambivalent. They understood that a male relative propositioning them was wrong, they were far less certain about a teacher. They clearly regarded attempts by male teachers to touch

and fondle them and their use of insulting or sexually explicit language as forms of abuse. However, they were less certain about a teacher's attempt to form what they might perceive as a serious relationship. The fact that the teacher might be misleading the girl with false promises was not recognised by all the girls. And, while almost all expressed their disapproval of girls having relationships with teachers, it seemed that a very small number of girls did respond positively and may even initiate the advance. This indicated that there was a desire, at least among a few girls, to be associated closely with a teacher, especially the popular ones and those who appeared eligible for marriage. One of the researchers witnessed an occasion when a male teacher (one of those accused by the girls interviewed most frequently of making advances to them) was approaching a group of 4-5 girls and spread out his arms as if to hug them; they responded positively by giggling and smiling.

When girls expressed their disapproval, it was not necessarily for moral reasons; some complained that the chosen girl had an unfair advantage over others, received more attention from the teacher in class and possibly higher scores for class work and school exams. They disliked the teacher showing favouritism unless it related to them. It was therefore not at all evident that every girl would refuse the teacher's advances if the offer was attractive. And for their part, the male teachers no doubt enjoyed being the centre of attention, even though they also feigned disapproval. One teacher stated that some teachers are popular 'for the wrong reasons'.

In the same way, with regard to boys, there was an indication that girls only disapproved of boys' behaviour in so far as they themselves were not interested in them. If a girl was attracted by a boy, she would not necessarily see his aggressive behaviour as abusive, rather as 'normal' for a boy and flattering to herself. Therefore, their perception of abuse was relative to their own feelings in the circumstances.

The boys, for their part, condemned the male teachers in the severest terms for having affairs with girls. They said they should be dismissed and never allowed to teach again; they could show no respect for such teachers. However, like the girls, they did not appear to condemn the teachers' behaviour on moral or ethical grounds, but rather because they saw it as unfair competition. Whereas they would categorise the teachers' behaviour as abusive (an abuse of power and position), they did not see their own behaviour towards girls, even when forcing themselves on the girls' attention and threatening them, in the same light because they considered themselves entitled to behave like this. The girls were their peers, the same age and often in the same class, and as such were the boys' 'property' not the teachers'. This attitude of 'buying' or 'owning' a girl is influenced by the continuing custom in Zimbabwe of *lobola* (brideprice), whereby the prospective husband or his family makes a payment to the girl's family as a symbol of bonding between the two families and in recognition of the fact that her family is losing her through the marriage.

As for the head teachers of the mixed schools, they knew that teachers were administering illegal beatings but they appeared to do little either in terms of warning them or reporting them to the authorities. The heads all said they occasionally reprimanded a teacher who administered excessive beatings but none tried to stop it completely. Indeed, two of the heads administered beatings and/or punishments themselves on a regular basis. This would suggest that they supported the use of

corporal punishment and did not see it as abuse. They also knew, or suspected, that sexual abuse by teachers was going on (or had gone on in the past). However, they had no strategy to address it. The head of one rural school laid all the blame on the teachers for having lax morals and being unprofessional in their conduct, but he did not address the issue with the teaching staff directly. Rather, he spoke to the pupils at assembly and warned them against improper behaviour by teachers. In the interview, he also talked of the futility of trying to discipline a teacher because of the lengthy bureaucratic procedures required; most head teachers did not bother. In contrast, the head of the peri-urban school chose to blame everything on the community, on the fact that the pupils came from rough, broken or uneducated families, with parents who failed to control their children and bring them up properly. It was only the (female) head of the second rural school who appeared to be trying to do something through regular staff development sessions (by emphasising to student teachers and new teachers the consequences of having affairs with girls) and by encouraging parents to come to the school to talk about their children, and to communicate better with them.

As for parents, there was some general recognition that sexual abuse by teachers existed in schools, but few had specific details. Some had heard of incidents in other schools and expressed their extreme disapproval. However, as already mentioned, parents might even encourage girls to form a liaison, with the hope that the teacher will marry her and, if a teacher gets a girl pregnant, the parents may ask the school not to make a complaint because they are arranging for him to marry the girl. Parents interviewed also blamed the situation on lack of discipline in the school (with several advocating **more** corporal punishment), the high turnover of teachers and the lack of senior experienced teachers staying with the same school over an extended period.

Perceptions of abuse in the school were therefore not clear cut and not as easy to define as in a domestic setting. Moderate corporal punishment was approved of by 38% of girls **(table 6)** and 76% of teachers (13 out of 17). Although not asked, some parents were clearly in favour and even thought the school should beat pupils more. Boys, also not asked, generally expressed disapproval of harsh punishments. As for girls, their attitude towards sexual advances by boys and male teachers was sometimes ambivalent, and they appeared to take as 'natural' the aggressive behaviour they experienced from both, although they spoke bitterly about it. Teachers and heads all recognised that boys sometimes assaulted girls and that male teachers had affairs with girls but nothing much appeared to be done to address either issue. Instead, blame for the problem was placed on the girl ('she was asking for it', 'she should have known better'), on the parents ('they should control their children better') on the community (broken families, prostitution etc) and on poverty (which makes girls vulnerable to sexual advances).

4.3 Who are the abusers, what are their characteristics and their reasons for abusing girls?

As already indicated, abusers were male teachers, female teachers (in terms of physical and verbal abuse), older boys in the school and male adults and adolescents outside the school. There was no consensus on the characteristics of abusers among those asked. Some teachers and heads characterised teachers who made sexual advances to girls as

young and often married; others said they were older men. Student teachers were said to be particularly guilty, and there was some evidence to support this.[18] Others were of the opinion that teachers having affairs with girls were those with personal problems e.g. excessive drinking or marital breakdown. It might also be possible to speculate that those with a particular disregard for authority and accepted norms of behaviour were more inclined to behave in this way. It was interesting that teachers who were named as frequently meting out beatings were also those who were well known for making sexual advances to schoolgirls.

As for physical abuse, although the overall impression was that male teachers used corporal punishment more than female teachers, in one of the rural schools boys were of the opinion that married female teachers beat more than male – perhaps, they said, because they imagined that they were taking revenge on their husbands! At the same time, there was some evidence that female teachers relied more on verbal abuse, perhaps, as was suggested, because they were frightened of beating boys. There was also some evidence that teachers used verbal abuse on girls more than on boys (perhaps being aware that beating girls was banned).

When asked to comment on the type of male pupil who might abuse girls either physically or sexually, the teachers suggested that they were often from troubled, poor or abusive family backgrounds, or from families where there was a lack of control and where they were given too much freedom at an early age. Some thought boys who drank beer and smoked *dagga*, and those who missed lessons were particularly guilty. However, the majority of the teachers thought that any man or boy (or, in one teacher's opinion, woman) is a potential abuser.

As already indicated, abuse in school is a reflection of abuse in the home. The research revealed that a number of girls were ill-treated in the home, and a few were possibly being sexually abused. Girls cited examples of mothers as well as fathers and other relatives beating them and shouting verbal abuse at them. The increased pressure on households when children have to be taken in by members of the extended family as a result of the death of parents from AIDS-related illnesses has made ill-treatment more common. In addition to being made to work long hours in the home (to earn their keep), such children may be given less food or pocket money than other children in the household. Some of the girls interviewed were being abused emotionally and psychologically, being denied attention and affection, and made to feel unwanted. One girl was told repeatedly by her cousins that she was costing them money, she should leave and 'find out who her father was'. In some cases where the parent sent money for the girl's upkeep, she might be deliberately made aware of the fact that not all of this was being spent on her.

4.4 Who are the abused, their characteristics and the consequences of the abuse?

There was strong evidence to suggest that those who come from poor families were more vulnerable to abuse. Girls as well as boys (the latter with much condemnation)

[18] The fact that they were often only a few years older than the girls in the upper forms of the school might encourage them to see schoolgirls as an appropriate object of their attention.

confirmed that girls were interested in adult men mainly for money, and this might be because their families were unable to provide them with school fees and other necessities. The data gathered on the girls' home background revealed that a significant number did not get sufficient support in the form of money for bus fares, uniforms, books etc. 54 girls in the total sample of 112 (48%) considered that not all their school needs, including pocket money, were being met. 29 girls (26%) said that they regularly went hungry. A few girls were clearly worried that their parents or guardians were not always able to pay their fees and they were sent home until they could pay, although this was not as widespread a problem as anticipated. Where girls lived at some distance (some as much as 15 kilometres away) and did not have money for bus fares, they were obliged to solicit lifts from car and truck drivers, which increased their chances of being assaulted or raped.

It was also the case that incidents of sexual harassment and assault by men and adolescent boys appeared to be worse for girls attending the rural and peri-urban schools, these being located in areas where poverty was high. However, poverty was not the only factor. Peer pressure combined with poverty to make girls vulnerable to abuse. The school reproduced the materialistic world that the girls found outside by allowing the sale of snacks, sweets and drinks from the school tuck shop during break times and there were vendors selling iced lollies, nuts and fruit outside the school gates. Pocket money was very important to the girls for this reason. Those who were able to afford such items were admired or envied. Where families were poor, girls might be tempted to look for money from older boys, male teachers or sugar daddies. As one girl wrote:

> *My parents refuse to give me pocket money. I see other pupils buying food at break time like crackers, drinks and so on. But I think some of them have boyfriends. Myself, I don't want to have a boyfriend but I don't have enough pocket money.*

The opportunity of finding a man to provide a comfortable lifestyle, even outside marriage, could be very attractive to a girl. Increasingly, the tradition of polygamous marriage in Zimbabwe and elsewhere in Africa is being replaced by a more informal arrangement whereby a man has a single marriage partner but also a girlfriend (sometimes more than one), often in a semi-permanent arrangement whereby he would provide her with accommodation and maintenance, especially if she has a child by him. In such a situation, a girl may say she is married although this is not legally the case. Hence, even if a girl knows a man to be already married, this does not exclude him from being viewed as a prospective partner.

Potential and actual abusers in the less socio-economically advantaged areas also played on girls' ignorance of sexual matters and their rights. In the town, and in middle class families in particular, girls were better informed from watching TV and films. They were more worldly: as one teacher said wryly 'If they offer sex for money, at least they insist on a decent price', whereas girls in the rural and slum areas were reputedly paid as little as 5-10 pence for sex, or just given some food.

It was perhaps surprising that, in the girls' school where the intake was overwhelmingly middle class and girls' opportunities for a career and an affluent

lifestyle were greater, the number of girls reported to have sugar daddies was high, higher than elsewhere. Apparently, there was status in being seen in smart clothes in town with a man, especially in a car. Great importance was attached to 'having a date'. It is difficult to draw a clear boundary between a 'boyfriend' and a 'sugar daddy' (especially as social convention usually favours the male being older than his female partner), but, according to the girls interviewed, these men were often much older. Some girls went into town at lunchtime or brought clothes to change into after school (which was not allowed). It would appear therefore that the desire to impress one's peers, to be grown up, to have fun is also influential in attracting girls to older men. As some girls said, even well off girls want more. Parents and teachers alike lamented girls' interest in material possessions and the attitude that what the family provided was no longer enough.

One can also say that abuse of girls was greater where they were not living with both biological parents. The break up of the traditional family was a quite striking feature of the background data, with over half the sample of 112 girls (64 girls) interviewed not living with both biological parents, and over half of these (29 girls) not living with either parent, but with other relatives, e.g. an uncle and/or aunt, a sister or a grandparent. Reasons for the break up of the family included: death of one or both parent (in many cases from AIDS related illness)[19], divorce or separation, migration of one parent (usually the father) to the town to seek work, and sometimes the placement of a child with relatives so that he/she could attend a nearby secondary school. Two of the school heads reported that some girls lived alone in rented rooms and some adolescents were heads of household. Girls were clearly more vulnerable than boys when families break up, as it is easier for boys to find casual work and they are less at risk of sexual abuse.

The research revealed a strong link between abuse and poverty. Poverty makes girls more vulnerable to sexual exploitation than boys because like adult women they are financially dependent on men. The girls in the less privileged schools know the opportunity of obtaining a well paid and secure job are slim and see their best chance for securing a comfortable future in finding a man to support them. Where there are greater economic opportunities for women, their sexual exploitation is likely to be less. However, the research revealed that other factors come into play in exposing girls to sexual abuse, in particular peer pressure and the desire to be seen as grown up and having fun.

As for the consequences of the abuse, sexual and non-sexual, it was clear that girls were troubled and frightened by the violent behaviour of boys and as a result did not find the school environment a conducive and secure one to study in. However, boys' aggressive behaviour in the school did not in itself cause girls to drop out. Rather it encouraged them to look for boyfriends elsewhere, which might lead them to drop out. If the boyfriend was unemployed or casually employed, or if he was an older man, he might want the girl to stay with him or do domestic work in the house. Irregular attendance would affect her academic performance adversely and she might then drop

[19] A survey of 300 Form 1 students carried out recently in School C revealed that 11 students had lost both parents, 35 had lost their father and 11 their mothers. Thus 19% of the sample had lost one or both parents. It is likely that the majority of deaths were AIDS-related.

out. Therefore, the fact that the school environment is not conducive to the formation of relationships between boys and girls has an impact on girls' performance and attendance. Contrary to what one might expect, encouraging mature relationships within the school, whether sexual or not, might then lead to increased participation and achievement by girls, and possibly also by boys, as they would be able to help each other with their studies and would be more likely to attend regularly.

In terms of abuse by teachers, girls were also troubled by the excessive use of corporal punishment, which might encourage some to form a sexual liaison with a teacher so as to avoid being beaten. For others, the risk of sexual advances from male teachers made them participate less in class for fear of being singled out for the teacher's attention. At the same time, girls who were favoured by teachers generated resentment among others. Teachers' unacceptable behaviour towards girls also provided a negative role model to boys and encouraged them to behave in a like manner.

4.5 What is the relationship between the victim and the abuser?

The relationship of abuser to victim is primarily one of male power and female subordination, male aggression and female passivity. As already stated, abuse was clearly related to the low socio-economic status of women and girls in Zimbabwean society. Here, as in much of Africa, females are considered the property of males and are expected to serve and obey them. The boys in the school were fulfilling the role into which they were being socialised by aggressively demanding the girls' attention and sexual favours, and being ready to pay for them. Money played an important part in demonstrations of male sexuality: boys gave small gifts of money to girls or bought them snacks, in an attempt to bribe them into a sexual liaison. However, while being condemned for their interest in money, the girls were also anticipating their future role as adult women in a society which teaches them to look to men for physical, financial and moral support. Adult men, whether male teachers or sugar daddies, also knew that they could buy sexual favours in this way and took advantage of the poverty which drove some girls to accept money and gifts. Not surprisingly given the prevailing power relationship, there was very limited evidence of female teachers having affairs with male pupils, or of girls giving money and gifts to boys.

The low social status accorded women and girls was manifest not only in the contemptuous attitude of those boys interviewed towards girls but also in the low self-esteem of the girls themselves. When asked whom they would blame if a girl got pregnant, **Appendix 2, table 3** reveals that two-thirds of the total sample of girls would blame the girl for getting pregnant, whereas only a quarter would blame both the boy and girl. And, most significantly, whereas seven boys out of the sample of 59 thought the boy was responsible (a very low figure in itself), **none** of the girls would hold the boy responsible. Hence, girls would attribute greater blame to themselves than the boys would (66% of the boys would blame the girl as opposed to 68% of the girls). Through their socialisation, girls had come to see themselves as responsible for their own problems and mistakes because of their sex. Girls who dropped out of school, or were expelled, as a result of pregnancy had brought this misfortune upon themselves.

As for boys, as stated above, the majority would not surprisingly lay the blame exclusively on the girl for getting pregnant, with only 13 boys (22 percent) considering

that blame should be shared equally (**table 3**). 'She should have known better', 'she has the final say in sex', 'she has the power to say no', 'she had allowed it to happen', 'she has behaved badly' were typical responses. Some even claimed that the girl would have planned it or tricked the boy into having sex, and therefore was solely to blame.

Blaming the girl rather than the boy was also the view of teachers and parents, with four out of 17 teachers (**Appendix 2, table 4**) and 12 out of 37 parents (**table 5**) blaming the girl alone. None would blame the boy and, in the case of a teacher getting a girl pregnant, only nine teachers (barely half) would blame the teacher while eight thought the girl would be equally to blame (**table 4**). This suggests that there was limited awareness or acknowledgement among teachers of the exploitative nature of teachers' sexual relationships with girls in the school. Interestingly, a number of parents/guardians (all women) would spread the blame more widely across the female sex by holding the mother responsible (**table 5**). This reinforces the view that the female sex views itself as flawed, weak and to blame for the failings of women as a whole, whereas there is a general reluctant to blame males.

Not surprisingly, therefore, girls also tended to accept male aggression as their fate. It was striking that very few girls took direct action when harassed or physically assaulted by schoolboys or men; this was partly from fear of further violence and reprisals but also from resignation, an acceptance that this was how things were, and a desire not to draw attention to oneself.

4.6 In what ways does the school environment condone or encourage abuse?

Abuse was both condoned and encouraged by the co-educational schools and the Ministry in that little punitive or disciplinary action appears to be taken, either against boys who harass and assault girls, or against teachers who administer corporal punishment regularly or make sexual advances to girls. Yet corporal punishment was banned in almost all circumstances, as explained at the beginning of this report. As for sexual abuse, it would only be if a girl became pregnant by a teacher and this came to light (e.g. the parents complained) that an official report might be submitted by the school head to the regional Ministry and disciplinary action taken. We heard of a few cases of teachers who were dismissed from a school because a girl had become pregnant; however, it was not clear whether any had also been expelled from the teaching profession or whether they were merely transferred to another school.

The school culture is one in which teachers tend to protect each other so that any misbehaviour does not come to the attention of the school head. Teachers either choose to ignore what is going on or like to think that the teacher is only joking with girls and not engaging in any serious sexual advances. Female teachers seem particularly guilty of choosing to turn a blind eye. Even if a teacher reports an incident to a senior teacher or head of department, he/she will be reluctant to take the matter further because of the cumbersome process of having to put the complaint in writing and, in the event of a criminal investigation, of giving evidence in court; a senior teacher will prefer to give an informal warning to a teacher who is misbehaving rather

than report it to the head. In the schools studied, it appeared to make no difference whether the head was male or female.[20]

The school allows male pupils to assault girls physically and verbally if they do not get what they want, while male teachers can use their superior position to take advantage of them sexually. It is significant that teachers would use corporal punishment liberally in class against pupils they consider to be misbehaving but would only rarely punish boys for assaulting girls outside the classroom. By default, therefore, the school presents male aggression as something normal and to be expected. This is perhaps not surprising given that the pattern of male behaviour at school is little different from that found in the home and wider society.

Furthermore, by projecting the teacher as a figure of authority and respect who should not be questioned by either parents or pupils, the school is guilty of helping to perpetuate abusive behaviour. For girls, this means that they are expected not to question inappropriate behaviour by male teachers on two accounts: firstly, the latter are in a position of authority in the school and secondly they are male. The fact that many girls have an ambiguous attitude towards male teachers' sexual advances further ensures that they will not openly question this behaviour.

There was clearly a lack of trust by girls in their teachers and few appeared to seek advice from them. The frequent use of beatings and abusive language, male teachers' inappropriate behaviour which goes unchecked, the suspicion that teachers gossip in the staff room about pupils (including laughing about complaints made by girls against teachers) and the suspicion that some teachers are guilty of favouritism (usually male teachers towards certain girls) in awarding grades, did not encourage positive sentiments towards teachers. None of the sample had reported incidents with male teachers to another teacher or to the head and only two had reported incidents with boys to a teacher. Most girls said that they did not trust their teachers, that the teachers were not interested in helping them, that they did not know what was going on and, even if they did, they would only think the girl was 'asking for it' if she was to complain. They thought teachers viewed girls as behaving provocatively towards boys and therefore being at fault. This attitude reflected that prevalent in the home, where wife-beating was common, males were given preferential treatment and girls more frequently blamed. As already noted, the female sex is usually to blame for personal difficulties.

In the all-girls' school, the teachers were less guilty of condoning abusive behaviour, in large part because the opportunity for it to flourish was not there. However, verbal abuse by teachers was apparently widespread. Teachers did not administer corporal punishment because they knew they could be disciplined, and being an elite school, they would not want to risk their posts. They also knew that parents (better educated and informed than elsewhere) would be quick to make an official complaint if they found that their child had been beaten. Although there were several cases of teachers having been reported for sexual harassment or the use of sexually suggestive language towards girls, it appeared to be relatively rare. Teachers appointed to such a school by

[20] For this reason, we have not revealed which schools were headed by women and which by men. This has allowed us to better protect the identities of the schools chosen as case studies.

the Ministry would be those with good reputations and higher qualifications, the 'cream' of the profession – not least because Ministry officials would be likely to send their own daughters there. At the same time, it should be recognised that the opportunities for girls to meet male teachers outside the school was greater than in the other schools, because of the proximity of the school to the town centre and night clubs, discos, restaurants, cinemas etc. Several teachers did suggest that male teachers propositioned girls away from the school premises. However, a teacher engaging in an affair with a schoolgirl would have to be very secretive for fear of being found out and transferred.

4.7 In what ways do the schools seek to prevent or address explicitly the incidence of abuse?

As already indicated, there was little evidence of schools taking matters of abuse seriously, with few cases of teachers being disciplined or dismissed as a result of sexual liaisons with schoolgirls. The introduction of Guidance and Counselling as a compulsory subject in all schools, and the Education for Living programme (supposedly taught by head teachers through assemblies and staff development sessions) are attempts to provide pupils with information about issues around sexuality, sexual and reproductive health, puberty, marriage and the development of personal relationships. The role of the Guidance and Counselling teacher is not only to teach lessons on the subject but also to provide advice to pupils with personal problems and to refer any serious matters to the head of Guidance and Counselling and where appropriate to the head teacher. However, all teaching staff interviewed agreed that the system did not work well and the three heads of Guidance and Counselling interviewed confirmed that few pupils approached them with personal problems.

There were a number of reasons for this. The selection of the head of Guidance and Counselling did not necessarily result in an appropriate person being appointed, and the criteria for the post were not clear. Such personnel were supposed to receive training from the Ministry but in reality many had not been trained. Heads of Guidance and Counselling did not necessarily know who the Ministry officer responsible for the subject was, nor whether there was a syllabus and materials. Copies of pupil books for Forms 1-4 called *Think About It! an action AIDS programme*, prepared with the assistance of UNICEF, were available but there was little evidence of them being used except in School D, and there only with Forms 1 and 2. In one of the mixed schools, there was no teacher in charge of the subject and limited teaching of it. Teachers were often chosen to teach the subject not because they were competent or had been trained, but because they did not have a full workload in other subjects. This resulted in many teachers teaching the subject without any guidance or preparation; in School A, 17 teachers out of 30 were teaching Guidance and Counselling and nine out of 24 in School B. Without adequate training and materials, they are likely to teach it in a boring and theoretical way, so that pupils are unable to relate the contents of the lesson to their own experiences and lives in an instructive way. There was also evidence that some teachers did not bother teaching these lessons, or else used the time allocated to teach other (examinable) subjects. The fact that this is not an examinable subject means that it is not taken seriously.

Ironically, evidence that the system is not working well is to be found in the willingness with which girls and boys volunteered to be interviewed for this research. It was striking that both were very keen to talk to the researchers and some girls would beg to be interviewed a second or a third time. Many girls approached the researchers outside the interviewing schedule seeking advice on personal problems, e.g. on how to react to boys' proposals, whether they should give in to their boyfriend's demands for sex, how to deal with menstrual problems and how to behave with boys generally. Many were alarmingly ignorant of sexual matters and matters relating to female puberty. In two cases, it was clear that the girls had sexually transmitted diseases which had not been treated. This indicated that there was a clear need for information and for counselling for these girls. At the same time, many boys expressed depressingly negative and biased opinions about girls, an issue which also needs to be addressed if Zimbabwe is to become an equitable society.

In terms of positive strategies already taken up, in all the schools studied there were afternoon clubs intended to tackle topics of personal relevance to the pupils, such as the Anti-AIDS Club and the Scripture Union which would teach about ethics, values and family life. (Other clubs were for sports, choir and gardening). In one school, the head teacher had initiated meetings with parents and had sought to tackle issues of inappropriate teacher behaviour through staff development sessions and had invited police and health officers to come to the school to speak to pupils about drug abuse and HIV/AIDS. However, limited interest by teachers and a poor grasp of appropriate teaching methods to pass on messages about sexuality and sexual health to pupils undermined whatever official initiatives had been launched.

4.8 What redress is currently practised by the educational and/or judicial system against acts of abuse?

The law allows for a teacher to be dismissed for 'improper association' even if the girl is over the legal age of consent (16 years). In practice, not much is done, as school heads are reluctant to report such cases for the range of reasons detailed above. The central Ministry of Education has the power to dismiss teachers under Article 38 of the Education Act. If a school files a complaint, the regional Ministry should conduct an investigation and hold a hearing; their findings will then be forwarded to the Ministry in Harare which may decide to investigate further or request additional evidence. The decision to take action lies with the central Ministry: this could result in the teacher being charged, which might involve demotion or a salary cut for a certain period, or in dismissal. Cases of alleged rape or schoolgirl pregnancy involving a teacher would usually result in a criminal prosecution, in which case the regional police would pursue the court case and the Ministry decide on how to deal with the teacher professionally. There are currently more criminal prosecutions than before, but these are mainly of head teachers. Evidence of abusing teachers is hard to secure, as has been explained above. It does appear, however, that a stronger line is starting to be taken and more dismissals resulting.

As for intimidation and assault of girls by boys, this is another feature of the violent climate of the school and little appears to be done to address it. Lack of evidence is the usual excuse given. Moreover, a girl who becomes pregnant by a boy in the school

must bear all the consequences; she will be expelled, will probably be unable to pick up her education again later and will be shunned by her family and friends, while the boy may continue with his studies as if nothing has happened, even though he may be guilty of under-age sex with a girl. In terms of equity and human rights, this is a flagrant injustice.

The same applies to the illegal use of corporal punishment. Little action is taken except where excessive beating results in injury, in which case it could lead to a criminal prosecution. The fact that the majority of teachers and head teachers administer it regularly in the belief that it is necessary to maintain discipline, and that some parents at least endorse its use (and use it frequently in the home), makes it very difficult to stamp out. The policy that it should only be used on boys is also controversial, as it is regarded by many as discriminatory.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THE ABUSE OF GIRLS IN SCHOOLS

5.1 Workshop findings

The final stage of the research was devoted to exploring possible strategies to address the problem of abuse in schools. To this end, participatory workshops were held with pupils in Schools A and C in October 1999, and with teachers in all four schools in January 2000 as part of their termly staff development programme.

The workshops with pupils were carried out primarily with girls but boys were also involved (see **Appendix 5** for a summary). It was noticeable how few strategies the girls came up with, but this was perhaps not surprising given their passive acceptance on the whole of the circumstances of their lives and the fact that they feared retaliation if they were too assertive. It was interesting to note that the boys too were fearful in the school, either of being beaten by teachers or of being bullied by older boys.

As for the teachers' workshops (see **Appendix 6** for a summary) they were noticeable in revealing the teachers' rather negative and scornful attitudes towards girls, typical of society generally. When asked what problems they faced when teaching girls, they produced a long list (the prioritised versions have been reproduced in the appendix). At the same time, however, in somewhat contradictory mode, they appeared to sympathise with their problems, to see the role that poverty, family background, exposure to abuse, long distances to school, domestic labour etc. played in making their lives difficult and perhaps encouraging them to enter sexual relations with men and boys. They also saw parents as being very much to blame. Despite their negative attitudes, they did propose workable strategies to address the problem of abuse.

The workshops revealed that there are many attitudinal barriers to change, on the part of girls, boys, teachers and parents. A reduction in abusive behaviour towards girls would require a radical change in school culture, and ultimately in society's view of women and girls. In particular, it would require the school to address the general issue of bullying, which affects boys as well as girls, and corporal punishment, the widespread and indiscriminate use of which contributes to the atmosphere of violence. The sexual abuse of girls is part and parcel of a school culture which institutionalises a variety of forms of aggression and violence.

The workshops also revealed the limitation of what the major actors (girls and teachers) felt they could do, or even what the school as a whole could do to help girls. As ever, this comes down to the subordinate status of women in society and their perceived lack of freedom for action. For example, girls said they were frightened of retaliation by boys if they confronted them about their behaviour, and indeed we know that boys frequently threatened to beat them just for turning down their proposals. In one school, the married female teachers said that it was impossible for them to report abusing male teachers because their husbands would not understand why they were reporting other women's husbands. A woman might end up being accused of seeking to cover up her own secret affair with the accused teacher.

The key to addressing the issue is breaking the silence at all levels, among girls, teachers, school heads, parents and Ministry officials. Many of the strategic actions suggested below stress opening up dialogue, information sharing and co-operation. It is the opinion of the researchers that, if the issue was openly discussed in the school, male teachers would be less likely to feel they can proposition girls with impunity. The wider cultural environment encourages silence from women and from children, especially girls.

At the same time, there is a clear tendency for everyone to blame the other and to expect others to change or take action rather than the onus being on themselves. So, teachers and heads blame the girls for immoral behaviour and their parents for not bringing them up properly; heads also blame the teachers for loose morals and lax behaviour, the Ministry blames the heads for not enforcing good standards and working in the interest of the school, and so on.... The one notable exception is the girls, who tend to blame themselves when they get into trouble; almost all the girls who were asked thought that a girl who got pregnant had only herself to blame and many also thought she should be punished. As we have seen, most parents, teachers and boys agreed. There is therefore a need for collective responsibility and accountability as well as for collective action.

5.2 Strategic actions

The following list comprises a number of strategic actions that individuals and/or groups can engage in, with a view to reducing the school-based abuse of girls. These recommendations emerge from the two sets of workshops, supplemented by suggestions from the interviews with school heads and Ministry officials. They do not of themselves provide an overarching strategy; that is for those in positions of authority to formulate and to implement. However, it is clear from this study that abuse has to be tackled on many fronts through a holistic approach. The following provides a range of actions which can form the basis of an institution-based strategy to counteract abuse. With a concerted effort, the impact could be significant.

Girls can

- act as a group, discuss issues and problems, support each other
- refuse to see a male teacher on his own, to go to his house or to his base room on request except in the company of another girl
- move around the school with other girls to reduce the opportunity of a girl being left vulnerable to assault by boys; likewise when walking to and from the school
- report cases, as a group preferably, of abusive behaviour to the Guidance and Counselling teacher, to the head teacher, to their parents or even to the police[21]; seek help from those teachers or social workers they trust – do not suffer in silence

[21] During the workshops, one girl said she had reported a boy who hit her to the police and he had been fined – she insisted that she had gone alone to the police station. It was not possible to verify her story.

- make it clear to teachers who proposition them that they are aware of the code of conduct on teacher behaviour and that 'improper association' is a punishable offence

- make it clear to teachers that they know that corporal punishment is banned for girls

- learn about their rights.

Teachers can

- create a more friendly and supportive environment which will encourage girls to come to them with their problems, and will enable teachers to be more understanding of their circumstances. Knowing all one's pupils by name, addressing them individually and showing that girls and boys are valued equally are important first steps. More effort can also be made to provide individual guidance and counselling to girls. Female teachers can hold informal talks with groups of girls and provide them with sex education.

- take greater responsibility to help girls to make informed decisions about their lives and to address their problems constructively. Recognise that teachers must act as positive role models for both girls and boys at all times.

- take Guidance and Counselling lessons more seriously and try to teach them more effectively. Sex education should be included. A more participatory approach would encourage girls to speak about issues. Some Guidance and Counselling lessons could be given to girls and boys separately. Using drama, visual representation (drawings) and debates on topical issues may also encourage participation; girls can be encouraged to write about their ambitions and fears in life.

- encourage greater understanding and respect between boys and girls; foster mature relationships between boys and girls so that they work collaboratively, e.g. when doing homework, rather than antagonistically. Requiring them to work more closely during class activities and encouraging discussion and debate on issues of relevance to them may help.

- encourage girls in particular to take on positions of responsibility, e.g. as group leaders, monitors etc.; motivate them to excel, by appreciating effort and rewarding good work; praise them and avoid derogatory remarks which belittle them and demean the female sex; use the new human rights curriculum as a way of highlighting girls' rights and issues of equality; show boys that they share responsibility in a sexual relationship (e.g. if a girl gets pregnant).

- take the register more frequently to cut down on pupil absenteeism; enforce rules on girls not wearing make up or accessories, and on both boys and girls wearing correct uniform, so that pupils understand that they are working in a disciplined environment

- avoid verbal abuse at all times and ask the head to endorse moderate corporal punishment only as a last resort.

The issue of corporal punishment is difficult to address with teachers. Its banning is not approved of by most teachers, and the policy of only caning boys is controversial. Most teachers in the three mixed sex schools strongly endorsed its use, in particular in the school in the peri-urban area, where teachers considered the community to be violent and pupils often out of control. However, most also conceded that some teachers used it excessively and at times arbitrarily. The possibility of stamping it out completely in the near future is remote, especially because heads themselves practise it routinely and because parents and many pupils also support its use. The Ministry however should attempt to enforce the rules on its use, to monitor it and to make heads responsible for complaints by pupils or parents and injuries suffered by pupils. Better trained teachers are also more likely to be able to impose discipline without resorting to physical punishment.

School management (heads and deputies) can

School culture

- change the school culture of violence and complacency, enforce effective disciplinary measures against teachers and pupils who indulge in abusive behaviour, provide more effective staff development, and access outside resources to help in this

- develop a more supportive school environment, with a greater emphasis on understanding and helping pupils, especially girls; supervise and reduce physical punishment given by teachers and make it clear that bullying and aggressive behaviour, whether by boys towards girls, or older boys/girls towards younger boys/girls, will not be tolerated.

- provide a forum for pupils, especially girls, to talk about issues of abuse in a non-threatening environment, possibly with individuals from outside the school (given the girls' current distrust of teachers); also for boys and girls to discuss issues together in an informal setting; introduce a 'principal's hour' for the head to meet pupils and discuss problems and issues. Parents could be involved in some of these activities.

- teach pupils greater self-esteem and autonomy, e.g. establish an effective pupil representation system (student council) with girls and boys at least equally represented; invite suggestions from pupils for improvements to the school (anonymously if preferable through a suggestion box); involve pupils in planning and leading school assemblies and other school functions; encourage pupils to start clubs in or outside the school; encourage girls to take up leadership positions. In all such initiatives, girls and boys should be seen to be treated equally and given equal responsibilities.

- Ensure that a female teacher always accompanies teams on sports trips (through a roster).

Teaching and training

- ensure that Guidance and Counselling is officially placed on the timetable, taught only by qualified (trained) teachers and by only one or two teachers in each school; if possible, arrange some in-service training to expose teachers to more participatory methods for teaching the subject.

- include training for teachers on how to tackle abuse within the school in staff development sessions; on how to deal with pupils' problems, especially those of girls; provide awareness raising around gender issues so that teachers are made aware of the ways in which they can undermine girls' self-confidence, perpetuate negative stereotypes about female characteristics and behaviour, dampen girls' aspirations and contribute to the institutionalised abuse of girls. Female teachers in particular need to be helped to become more assertive; they should see it as their duty to protect girls from abuse by male colleagues, to support them in asserting their rights and to stop gender violence in schools. As women, they too lack the power to act.

- try to improve the provision of textbooks and good library materials, so that pupils can complete their homework (and avoid being beaten) and be occupied during breaks and free time. Funds could perhaps be raised by parents and the community.

Enforcement of rules

- ensure that teachers know that they will be reported if they transgress the regulations on appropriate behaviour towards pupils, e.g. the ban on pupils entering teachers' houses or base rooms. Verbal and physical abuse by teachers will not be tolerated. At the same time, rules regarding pupil behaviour (coming to school drunk, not wearing proper uniform etc) should be enforced fairly and consistently, so as to ensure a disciplined learning environment.

- ensure that the reasons for punishments are clearly explained and are aimed at correcting behaviour rather than engaging the pupils in tasks which are not useful or educational.

- ensure that parents know what the school regulations are; involve parents in the formulation of school policy on teacher and pupil management.

- restrict, or even ban, the sale of snacks and drinks during school hours, so as to reduce the significance of pocket money within the school and thus lessen the incentive for girls to take money from boys.

Outside resources

- invite resource persons from outside to come to talk to the pupils about 'life' issues around sexual health, abuse and children's rights (e.g. health officers, medical practitioners, police, the Victim Friendly Court officer, social welfare officers, officers involved in the Child Welfare Forum)

- invite respected female members of the community to come and talk to the pupils about their lives and the role that schooling played in it. In particular, successful or high profile women from the region, e.g. women in senior public positions, female professionals, businesswomen, female members of parliament, can provide affirmative role models for girls, and show them that women can be highly successful, can aspire to a career and an independent income alongside marriage and child-rearing.

- provide imaginative careers guidance for girls so as to broaden their horizons beyond a future as housewife and mother, and to raise their self-esteem and expectations. Inviting successful women to speak to them is one strategy.

- invite girls or women who dropped out of school through pregnancy and subsequently saw their lives enter a negative spiral to talk about their experiences; if available show films on this subject; even consider inviting girls or women who have contracted the HIV virus to speak.

- work closely with parents and the community; make the school more accessible and welcoming to parents and make them feel part of it; encourage them to take an interest in their children's education, problems etc; respond positively to parents' suggestions and contributions; avoid using parents' meetings as a vehicle to reprimand them and highlight their shortcomings; offer services to the community as a sign of co-operation and respect.

- seek support from the Ministry on all the above initiatives.

Parental involvement

- encourage parents and guardians to talk to their children more, in particular to girls about problems relating to puberty. Even though this may not be considered appropriate culturally, the AIDS epidemic makes this an urgent task. Moreover, the tradition of girls talking about sexuality and puberty with aunts, and boys with uncles, is fast disappearing as family structures break down and people become more mobile in their work. Parents and schools together need to take on the responsibility of providing pupils with sex education.

- encourage parents and guardians to treat boys and girls equally, to value the education of girls as offering them career and employment opportunities alongside marriage and child rearing, which will make a positive contribution to family well being. Parents need to help girls to raise their self-esteem and to share out household tasks equitably. Those who are looking after children as guardians must treat them as fairly as their own children; they should be reminded that the ill-treatment of children constitutes abuse and is punishable by law.

- encourage parents to trust what their children tell them, especially when girls have problems, and to listen to their children rather than blame them (girls especially)

- make it clear to parents that they value their involvement in their children's education and that they expect them to assist and supervise homework, to show an interest in their children's progress and to discuss this progress with the teachers

- work closely with parents in monitoring pupils' attendance at school; parents need to liaise with the school and to express concern if their children do not come home on time, make excuses or say they have to do homework at school.

- encourage parents to provide their children with their basic requirements, e.g. school fees and levies (to be provided on time), bus fares and pocket money.

- encourage parents to refrain from using abusive language or behaviour towards their children.

It is important that parents and guardians monitor the movement of their children, know who their friends are and how they spend their leisure time. Much abusive activity occurs between the home and the school, especially when children travel long distances alone.

The Ministry of Education (central and regional) can

- ensure a rigorous selection of trainee teachers, which will include routine background checks (e.g. for a criminal record) and vetting of teacher appointments, to include a careful investigation of why teachers are asking for a transfer, their performance in previous teaching posts etc

- select head teachers carefully, less on seniority and more on record of good performance, management and leadership skills

- provide training for heads in management and leadership, to include how to take effective disciplinary action with both teachers and pupils; this should also train them as to how to maximise the staff development time available so as to tackle these issues effectively [22]

- limit the number of teachers who teach Guidance and Counselling in each school to one or two (one full time) to teach all lessons in this subject; ensure regular visits to schools from the Ministry of Education to support the teaching of this subject (there was no evidence of this at all from the schools studied).

- provide a gender awareness component in all in-service training courses and workshops, also for heads and education officers; provide more effective training for Guidance and Counselling teachers

- provide greater support for teachers of this subject through materials, syllabus and guidelines which are distributed and used in all schools; improve communication

[22] Those heads interviewed appeared to find it difficult to confront the issue of teacher abuse, abuse by older boys and general bullying in their schools. They were quick to blame the teachers for their loose morals, the pupils for their poor upbringing, the parents for their ignorance and bad behaviour, and the community generally.

with schools on the requirements of Guidance and Counselling; ensure a more effective distribution of the syllabus and materials to schools

- establish a more effective, and less cumbersome, reporting system to encourage heads to take action against abusing teachers and pupils, while also making heads responsible where they fail to report cases of teacher abuse

- send circulars to schools with the names of all teachers found guilty of crimes of abuse, to act as a deterrent to others; liaise with courts to publicise cases of school-based abuse

- create a helpline in regional Ministries where abused pupils can call for help or a letter box for pupils to report perpetrators of abuse, whether at home or in the school. The helpline number and address should be publicised in schools.

- improve links with other regional authorities and agencies involved in the reporting and treatment of abused schoolchildren, e.g. police, health, social welfare, NGOs; better recording and sharing of information, e.g. with hospitals (through the Ministry of Health) and with the police, in cases of schoolgirl (and schoolboy) rape

- share experience with other active bodies working to counteract abuse, HIV/AIDS and domestic violence, and to promote women's and children's rights, e.g. with UNICEF on curriculum materials, with the Ministry of Health on health campaigns, with the police on the Victim Friendly Court system, all with a view to educating children about their rights and legal procedures to follow in cases of abuse

- try to place married teaching couples in the same school or in the same locality, rather than split them up as currently happens

- enforce fully the policy that girls who have been expelled from one school because of pregnancy can continue their education in another school after the birth.

Teacher training colleges can

- provide awareness building among trainee teachers during their pre-service training, especially greater emphasis on issues of ethical standards of behaviour (taught in the course on ethics and values) so that they are aware of the seriousness of abusing the trust that is placed in them as teachers

- provide training in the use of more participatory and enquiry-based teaching methods especially in teaching Guidance and Counselling lessons

- provide gender awareness training so that trainees are made aware of the ways in which teachers can, consciously or not, perpetuate negative stereotypes about female characteristics and behaviour through the way that they treat girls and boys in the school, both in class and outside

- include supervision of trainee teachers' behaviour while on teaching practice, not just of academic performance; obtain the opinions of heads and pupils on the trainees' behaviour

- link up with higher education institutions and schools to carry out research on issues relating to child abuse; involve teachers and college lecturers in this

Ministry initiatives

As has been seen, strategic actions to address the abuse of girls can cover a wide range of areas which include: individual initiatives by girls and by teachers with their pupils; school-based initiatives, usually with the head responsible for seeing them through; and initiatives by the Ministry. Teachers, school heads and Ministry officials all need to encourage parents to become more involved in the school. An integral holistic approach to stamping out abuse is necessary.

It is not difficult to see that the above strategic actions require significant change of attitude and behaviour on the part of teachers, head teachers, parents, Ministry officials, boys, and girls themselves. The issue of sexual abuse is tied up with the illegal use of corporal punishment, as they form part of the same culture of violence within schools. Change in attitude and behaviour at the individual level will only be effective if it results in a change of institutional culture, towards a more 'caring' and democratically run school.

Translating the above from being just a 'wish list' of desirable changes, created by individuals and groups who prefer to see others take action rather than themselves, into a strategic plan is not easy. However, below are listed some possible Ministry interventions which might form part of a strategic plan:

- School-based interventions can be initiated through NGOs already doing work with abused women, e.g. Musasa, or on HIV/AIDS education e.g. ARHEP (see Kaim in references). Given the girls' distrust of teachers, any interventions which rely exclusively on teachers are unlikely to work. A national NGO, possibly with external funding, could send experienced facilitators into schools to run participatory workshops with girls and boys to develop awareness of the seriousness of abuse (as an activity that can bring civil prosecution or disciplinary measures on the perpetrator), and to identify suitable strategies for victims to report it and contain it effectively.

- School-based workshops can be held with teachers and parents to raise awareness of the issues surrounding abuse and develop school-based action plans to address it. Bringing the issue into an open forum for debate will make it more difficult for perpetrators to carry on without fear of being reported.

- At the regional and national level, a conference can be organised to disseminate the findings of the report to education officers, school heads, and to civic leaders, police officers, social welfare officers and NGO personnel working with children and adolescents. This can be supplemented by a series of workshops which seek to

develop national and regional initiatives and draw up an action plan for targeting schools.

- External support can be provided to NGOs or other civil groups so that they can engage in lobbying and advocacy work to bring the issue to the forefront of the government policy agenda in the field of education and health.

- Funding can be provided for additional research into the effects that abuse has on girls' learning and achievement (not explored in this study).

6. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This research uncovered a great deal of sexual and sex-oriented activity in and around the four schools which took part in the study. This activity was transformed all too easily into abusive behaviour by a school culture which tolerated physical as well as sexual violence. In the three co-educational schools, the widespread and illegal use of corporal punishment, aggressive and intimidating behaviour by older boys and sexual advances from male teachers went unchecked and were considered as 'normal'. At the same time, the abuse of girls was part of a broader tolerance of violence in the schools, which also saw younger boys being abused by older boys and widespread bullying of both boys and girls. While the abuse of girls should not be viewed in isolation from other features of school violence, it is important to recognise that girls face additional and unique forms of aggression solely because of their sex.

The gendered pattern of abusive behaviour within the school mirrored that found outside in the wider society, with male domestic violence against women common and sugar daddies preying on young girls as they went to and from school. Poverty made the risk of girls being exposed to sexual exploitation much greater since boys, teachers and adult men used money and gifts as a bribe to coax them into sexual relationships. Given the materialistic culture in which the girls lived, the strong influence of peers and the greater social and economic power wielded by males, girls may not be able to resist continuing demands for sex. Teachers' position of authority in the school would also make it difficult for girls to refuse their sexual advances. Given the very high incidence of HIV infection among this female age group, girls are risking their lives in a very real sense.

The research also revealed a remarkable complacency on the part of teachers and head teachers in dealing with these issues of abuse. There was a general reluctance by head teachers, teachers and male pupils in the mixed schools to acknowledge that male behaviour (and female behaviour in the use of corporal punishment and verbal abuse) towards girls was unacceptable. Because it was considered as 'normal', it was not addressed. Boys are taught from an early age that male control and dominance over females is the norm, while girls are taught to be submissive and dependent on men and to accept male aggression passively. When combined with the girls' ambivalent attitude towards male sexual advances and their limited comprehension at this age of what a sexual relationship entails, abuse in schools flourishes. Far from counteracting this gender socialisation, the school merely reinforces it.

Evidence of a link between the abuse of girls and their under-achievement in school is not clear from this study. What is clear, however, is that the girls were being forced to study in a hostile and insecure environment which denigrated them as female, and where they were unable to concentrate fully on their studies. Attempts to prepare boys and girls for adult life in these schools are failing badly; sex education is poorly taught, teachers fail to take on a counselling role with girls and instead abuse them physically, verbally and sometimes sexually; girls do not discuss problems with their parents, who in turn are all too ready to see them as being at fault and to punish them accordingly.

To address the issue of the abuse of girls in schools, all parties involved in schooling must recognise that the abuse of girls in and around schools is a consequence of the way in which society accords power to men over women. We cannot address the issue effectively unless we also seek to raise the status of women in society, enforce their rights as equal citizens, and ensure that acts of abuse are prosecuted. If action is seen to be taken, and the silence and complacency surrounding abuse is broken, many abusers will stop. One vehicle for addressing issues of abuse is of course formal education. It is imperative that school heads and Ministry officials see it as their responsibility to eradicate abusive behaviour so that girls and boys alike can fulfil their potential in a safe and secure learning environment.

At the same time as seeking to eliminate the abuse of girls, it is also necessary to investigate and address the abuse of boys, e.g. excessive corporal punishment, verbal abuse, bullying (especially of younger boys by older boys) and possible cases of sexual abuse of boys by teachers, male or female. The bullying of girls by girls was also not addressed by this study and certainly exists; this also needs to be investigated.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: numbers interviewed

	Round 1				Round 2	Round 3	Total Inter-viewed
	School A	School B	School C	School D			
Girls	32	20	37	23	73	17	112
Boys	24	11	24	0			59
Teachers*	5	3	6	3			17
Head teachers	1	1	1	1 (deputy head)			4
Parents**	21	10	6	0			37
Officials							
Éducation	4						4
Social Welfare	1						1
Police	1						1

* includes Guidance and Counselling teacher for Schools B, C and D

** comprises 20 mothers, 3 fathers, 7 grandmothers, 4 sisters, 2 aunts and 1 uncle

Appendix 2: Tables

Table 1: January 1999 enrolments in the four schools

School 1 (agricultural)		Boys	Girls	Difference
Form	1	61	57	-4
	2	72	72	0
	3	69	49	-20
	4	73	47	-26
Total		**275**	**225**	**-50**
School 2 (mining)				
Form	1	100	102	+2
	2	120	82	-20
	3	119	81	-38
	4	79	47	-34
Total		**418**	**312**	**-94**
School 3 (peri-urban)				
Form	1	107	193	+86
	2	149	139	-10
	3	126	131	+5
	4	137	141	+4
Total		**519**	**604**	**+85**
School 4 (all-girls)				
Form	1		160	
	2		160	
	3		160	
	4		160	
Total			**640**	

Table 2: Background information on girls

Round 1 Interviews	SCHOOLS				
	A N = 32	B N = 20	C N = 37	D N = 23	Total N = 112
Average age	15.3	14.9	14.1	13.8	
Form	2 and 3	2 and 3	1 and 2	2	
Living with one parent	10	6	11	8	**35**
Living with neither parents	7	8	12	2	**29**
Living 5 or more kms from school	12	10	5	5	**32**
More than 2 hours domestic work	17	20	13	2	**52**
Basic needs not satisfied	12	17	21	4	**54**
Go hungry regularly	10	9	8	2	**29**

Table 3: **If a schoolgirl gets pregnant …… girls' and boys' opinions**

	GIRLS (Round 1)					BOYS			
	A (N=32)	B (N=20)	C (N=37)	D (N=23)	Total (112)	A (N=24)	B (N=11)	C (N=24)	Total (59)
Whom would you blame if a schoolgirl got pregnant?									
Girl	24	10	27	15	**76**	15	8	16	**39**
Boy	0	0	0	0	**0**	2	1	4	**7**
Both	4	9	10	5	**28**	7	2	4	**13**
Parents	2	1	0	1	**4**				
Nobody	2	0	0	0	**2**				
No reply	0	0	0	2	**2**				
Who would you punish?									
Girl	11	6	18	7	**42**				
Boy	2	3	0	0	**5**				
Both	1	0	2	2	**5**				
Neither	17	10	17	12	**56**				
The mother	1	0	0	0	**1**				
No reply	0	1	0	2	**3**				

Table 4: If a schoolgirl gets pregnant ..... teachers' opinions

TEACHERS

	A (N=5)	B (N=3)	C (N= 6)	D (N=3)	Total (=17)
Whom would you blame if a schoolgirl got pregnant by a pupil?					
Girl	1	1	1	1	4
Boy	0	0	0	0	0
Both	4	2	5	2	13
Whom would you blame if a schoolgirl got pregnant by a teacher?					
Girl	0	0	0	0	0
Teacher	1	3	4	1	9
Both	4	0	2	2	8

Table 5: If a schoolgirl gets pregnant ..... parents' opinions

PARENTS

	A (N= 21)	B (N=10)	C (N=6)	Total (N=37)
Whom would you blame if a schoolgirl got pregnant?				
Girl	5	7	0	12
Boy	0	0	0	0
Both	7	1	0	8
Mother	6	0	2	8
Parents	1	1	2	4
Girl and parents	0	1	1	2
Everyone	2	0	1	3

	GIRLS					BOYS			
	A	B	C	D	Total	A	B	C	Total
Round 1 (girls)	N=32	N=20	N=37	N=23	N=112	N=24	N=11	N=24	N=59
Beaten by teacher	31	17	37	0[1]	**85**	24	11	22	**57**
Teachers beating pupils is always wrong	13	15	20	21	**69**				
Teachers beating pupils is not wrong	14	5	12	1	**32**				
Teachers beating pupils is sometimes acceptable	5	0	5	1	**11**				
Round 2 (girls)	N=23	N=13	N=20	N/A	N=56				
Who beats the most in your school?									
Male teachers	14	4	8		**26**	12	2	16	**30**
Female teachers	3	4	7		**14**	9	6	6	**21**
Both	6	5	5		**16**	3	3	2	**8**
Who gets beaten the most?									
Boys	10	4	5		**19**	15	6	20	**41**
Girls	0	0	15		**15**	2	0	0	**2**
Both	13	7	0		**20**	7	5	4	**16**
No reply	0	2	0		**2**	0	0	0	**0**

[1] 16 out of 18 girls said they had been beaten at primary school.

APPENDIX 3: Interview data

GIRLS' INTERVIEWS

Abuse by male pupils

Examples of abusive behaviour by boys were provided by nearly half the girls interviewed. These included:

One boy came into our class, and poked my head with a pen and accused me of ignoring him.
A boy grabbed my breast during sports. I nearly cried because it was painful.
Sometimes they chase us in the hope of touching our breasts.
One boy said to me 'Let me feel your breasts to see if they are there or not'.
This guy in Form 4 snatched my bag and said he would only return it if I accepted his proposal.
This boy in Form 4 touched my bum – he pretended it was by mistake but it wasn't because he laughed with his friends.
A Form 4 boy pulled and twisted my arm when I refused to talk to him.
The other day I was late for school and the prefect said if I accepted his proposal he would not punish me.

Abuse by teachers

a. Girls who had been propositioned

Of the 14 girls who said they had been propositioned by a male teacher, seven were in School A, four in School B and three in School C. None said they had been approached in School D (however, teachers there reported a few incidents, as detailed in section 3.3 of the report). Some of the circumstances under which the girls were approached were described by them as follows:

He slipped a love note into my exercise book.
He said 'I would like you to be my special girl, think about it'.
He said 'I want to see you in my office – you look special'.
He opened his arms to hug me on the sports field, then said 'Why are you running away? I'm just playing'.
A student teacher asked me to come to his office; when I refused he asked if he could walk home with me after school. He asked me to stay behind after the end of school.
I was sent a message with a Form 4 boy at the end of a sports day in another school, telling me that the teacher (who was sitting in a car with other male teachers) wanted to speak to me; I realised this was inappropriate and did not go.
A student teacher asked me to carry his books all the time; one day he told me I 'looked like an angel'. He called me 'Eve' and asked if he could be my 'Adam'.
He told me that he loved me.
He pretended to have a message for me but he did not want to say it in public. He then told me I was a very nice, special girl. (He did this twice.)

One girl said her primary school teacher had proposed to her when she was in Grade 6:

He told me that he loved me and I yelled at him. After that in class he tried to hit me, or send me out of the class for no apparent reason. The memory makes me cry every time I think about it.

b. Girls who know others whom they suspect of having an affair with a teacher

Of the 48 girls who said they knew another girl who had been approached, 18 were in School A, 11 in School B, 14 in School C and five in School D. Some girls named several girls. However, in none of the schools were they completely sure that the girl had accepted; they just suspected so. When asked how they knew that girls were having affairs with teachers, evidence given was:

My friend was sent by the teacher to call the girl to his home – they live in the same neighbourhood.
She asked me to take a letter to the teacher (the same named above) – she told me herself (about the relationship).
She refuses to go home with us, pretending to have homework.
She brings money, 20 Z$, 50 Z$ and buys lots of eats.
She is favoured in sports teams.
They say they have guaranteed places in the sports team as long as the teacher is there.
She says she cannot fail geography.
She claims the teacher is her friend.
The teacher stands too close to her.
They laugh and pass jokes.

c. Evidence that girls sometimes encouraged teachers

Ten of the 17 girls interviewed for a third time agreed that some girls encourage the teacher by, for example:

Giggling and moving up and down when the teacher is there
By pushing themselves on the teacher and asking silly questions such as 'Are you married?' and 'What is your salary?'
They plead with teachers for places in the sports teams
Some girls put on short skirts and make up.

Abuse by older men and 'sugar daddies'

Many examples were provided by girls in all four schools, including:

A man just touched me on the breasts. I couldn't do anything because he just forced his hand on me. I was angry and I nearly hit him but I was afraid.

There are two men who pester me a lot. They are married. One of them wanted to give me 50 Z$. He said I should buy whatever I wanted. I did not take it.

They say 'I want to marry you'. One said 'if you marry me I will divorce my wife and stay with you'.

One day, a drunken man blocked my way and tried to touch my breasts.

Two Form 4 girls come to me regularly. They claim one of the builders is their brother and that he loves me very much. I don't believe them. I get annoyed because these big girls get paid for securing girls for these builders.

One girl stays near our place and a car comes often to pick her up. She looks very quiet .. but her sisters do the same. They stay alone, brothers and sisters.

Sophia goes out with a gold panner. He sent me three times to call Sophia to come to his house to cook and clean for him because his wife is in the rural areas. One day he gave me 100 Z$ to give to Sophia.

Last Monday a man about 30 years old proposed to me …. He told me that if I loved him he would give me money and everything I wanted. …. After two days, he came to me again on my way home from school. He had a packet of sweets, biscuits and a bottle of soft drinks. I could not escape from him. He tried to give me sweets but I refused. He told me 'If I see you again and you don't give me some good results, I will kill you'. From that day up to this I have not seen him and I am afraid of him.

My sister's husband always approaches me when I go to his house. Sometimes he pays my school fees and that's why he wants me to be in love with him. When he first talked to me about that, I refused and he said 'I am paying your school fees so you must pay me back' (be in love with him).

When I was getting into a mini-bus, a man touched my breasts. Then he said he was sorry. I shouted at him because it was deliberate. When he said he was sorry he was smiling.

BOYS' INTERVIEWS

d. Examples of ways in which boys proposition girls

If you have one girl, boys will laugh at you. If you have more than one, you are seen as a great guy who shows his machoism.
Those who have many girlfriends are regarded as 'big stuff'
They compete to see who gets the girls especially new Form 1 girls
Boys compete in sports to outshine each other to attract girls; they use sports as a bait to get girls
Boys fight over girls, threaten each other
Boys write letters with sexual language and draw people having sex
You tell lies about your competitor (say he takes drugs, drinks, has no money); you undermine the opposition
You show off money, especially 100 Z$ bills (called 'pins' by pupils)
You bet as to who will get a particular girl
You buy the girl lunch or snacks

Boys wear smart clothes and try to appear bright and witty.

e. Suggestions that girls sometimes made sexual advances to boys

Girls trick boys into having sex, they plan to get pregnant
Some girls bring money to buy goodies for boys
A girl can force a boy to have sex
Girls want money; if you have it they won't leave you
Girls may have other boyfriends; boys stick to one girl, but girls may double-cross you.

Appendix 4

Teachers' definition of abuse

Which of the following would you classify as 'abuse' against girls?

a) male students demanding sexual favours or physical intimacy of girls
b) male teachers demanding sexual favours or physical intimacy of girls
c) men outside the school demanding sexual favours or physical intimacy of girls
d) bullying (non-sexual, physical or verbal) by other students (male or female)
e) insulting language used by teachers (male or female) about female students
f) negative attitudes expressed by teachers (male or female) about girls' behaviour, intelligence, commitment to study etc
g) corporal punishment by teachers (male or female)
h) threats to beat or punish a girl who refuses to respond to a male student's sexual advances
i) threats to make a girl fail her exam if she refuses to respond to a male teacher's sexual advances
j) making a girl do additional tasks (cleaning a classroom, cooking for a male teacher etc)

Appendix 5: Pupils' Workshops

Two-day workshops in Schools A and C in October 1999

Two workshops were held, each over a two-day period, in two of the case study schools (A and C). Each consisted of a number of activities using participatory (PRA) methods. We spent the first day exclusively with girls; the first part of the second day was spent with boys on their own, and they were joined later by the girls. The girls ended the workshop on their own with some role play. There were 15 girls and ten boys involved in the activities with School A and 18 girls and ten boys in School C.

The girls started the first morning with 'loosening up' activities in the form of songs and games. They were asked to indicate whether they liked school or not by placing stickers on 'Happy' and 'Sad' faces. Most indicated that they liked school.

In groups of four to five, the girls were then asked to draw a **map** of the school and the surrounding area and use stickers of different colours to indicate areas where they felt safe and areas where they felt unsafe (green for 'safe', red for 'unsafe'). The groups then came together to discuss the maps giving reasons for their choices.

The girls were then asked what they understood by 'abuse'. They appeared to have a clear understanding of this, although there later emerged heated debate as to whether corporal punishment constituted abuse or not. Most thought that they did not deserve beatings for offences like noise making, lateness and failure to answer questions correctly in class, but a surprising number did approve of corporal punishment in moderation.

Once having made clear that they understood the term 'abuse', they were asked to draw a **spider** with each leg indicating the type of abuse that existed in and around the school. Each pupil in the group was given a set of 20 sticky dots and asked to place them where she thought the abuse was most serious. Girls identified being beaten by teachers, and being touched on their private parts (breasts or buttocks) by boys and teachers as the most serious forms of abuse, followed by Form 4 girls trying to persuade them to go with Form 4 boys, and teachers not giving their lessons. Again the groups came together to discuss the forms of abuse.

They were then asked to draw a 'cause and consequence' **tree** with roots as causes and branches as consequences. Two groups were asked to address the double question: 'Why do boys have sex with girls? / Why do girls have sex with boys?' and another two groups 'Why do teachers have sex with girls? / Why do girls have sex with teachers?'

When asked to indicate why a girl would have sex with a teacher, most indicated that the girls wanted money to buy things like chocolate and sweets at break time. They might also want to show off or do what they think other girls are doing. Because of the AIDS scare, teachers would want to have sex with young girls whom they thought were free of the disease because they were still virgins. Teachers might also want sex with young girls 'to satisfy their feelings' or because they envied the girls' lives. As

consequences, the girl might get pregnant but the teacher if he was married would not leave his wife for her; the girl might also get a sexually transmitted disease or AIDS. The girl will be expelled and she may end up committing suicide or dumping the baby. The teacher may also be dismissed.

When asked why boys wanted sex with girls, alongside the suggestion that boys wanted to experiment, to make girls lose their virginity and to be sure that the girl loved him, the girls (and the boys when they did the activity the following day) expressed the notion that boys want to 'fix' the girl, i.e. place her under his control, show that he is a man, and in some sense punish her for being female. As for a girl, she might have sex with a boy because she needed money, but also because she might want him to marry her or to show her genuine feelings.

Cause and consequence tree

The same activities, in an abbreviated form, were carried out with boys on the second day. The boys and girls were then brought together and their activities discussed. A comparison of the **school maps** indicated that there were common areas where both boys and girls felt unsafe (red stickers), such as outside the school boundaries, near the administration block which housed the school office and the staff room, and in the orchard or vegetable garden. It was interesting to learn that, whereas girls were clearly afraid of boys, the boys too had their own private fears. In particular, younger boys in both schools complained of bullying by the bigger boys. In one of the schools visited, one of the bigger boys in the workshop group had a professionally made rubber strap in his possession. When asked about it he claimed that it belonged to a friend.

However, girls identified more areas within the school grounds where they felt unsafe. These included: the caretaker's house, the new classrooms being built (where there were construction workers) and the car park (see below). On another map, the girls identified the teachers' houses (out of bounds just outside the school boundary) and the tuckshop.

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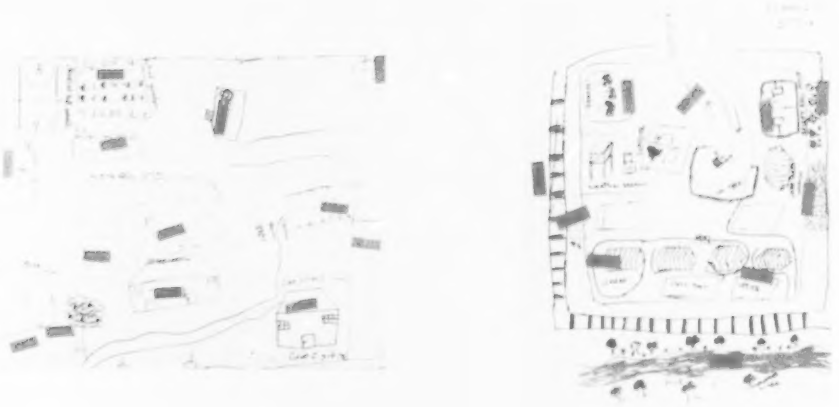
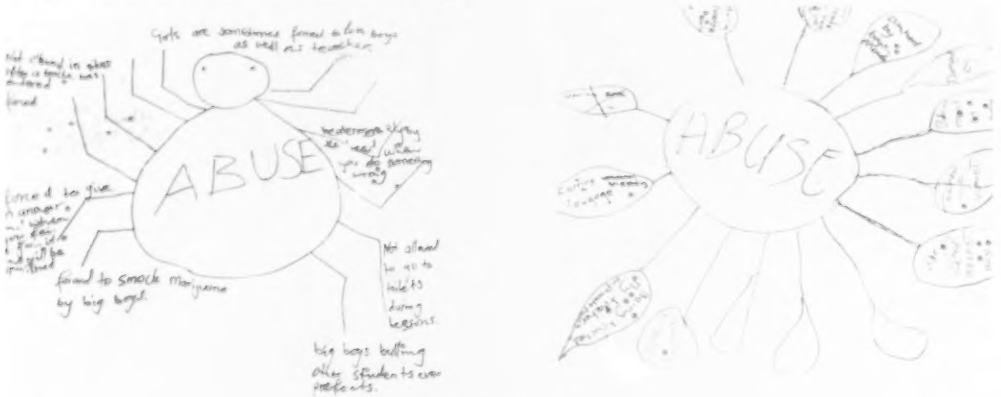


Girls **Safe and unsafe places in the school** **Boys**

A comparison of the **'abuse' spiders** showed that girls saw abuse very much in terms of beatings by teachers and boys and being touched by teachers and boys. For boys, being beaten by teachers and given harsh punishments were of most concern as was also being sent out of the class, and being forced to smoke *dagga* and drink beer by older boys around the school premises. In one of the schools, it was known that boys frequently bunked lessons to go off into the nearby mountain to smoke and drink – they were referred to as 'mountain boys'.



Girls **'Abuse' spider** **Boys**

After comparing their school maps and the 'abuse' spiders, the girls and boys were asked in mixed groups to draw on a single sheet of paper an **ideal relationship**, with the boys drawing their ideal female partner on one side of the sheet and the girls drawing their ideal male partner on the other side. Most of the groups focused on physical appearance like good looks and smart dressing when doing this task, but when required to indicate the four most important characteristics that the mixed group could all agree on (indicated by brightly coloured cards), these tended to be moral qualities such as good behaviour, being respectful, honest and loving, and being educated. It was noticeable that in these mixed groups, the girls were much

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quieter and the boys were uneasy.

an ideal relationship

In the afternoon of the second day, in each of the schools girls prepared some role play about the abuse they experienced in and around the school. Some were very realistic. One portrayed a male teacher who used his position to abuse girls in his class; if the girl fell for his sexual favours she would be given pocket money and be the teacher's favourite but if she declined he would use any pretext to beat her.

Another group showed how a teacher's attention was focused on one particular girl in the class: the teacher passed comments on how smart the girl was, patted her and tried to straighten her blouse so as to touch her on the breasts. The class knew what was going on and booed and hissed when he asked her to come to the front of the class to read, and when he praised her after she had read a passage badly in class. He would detain her after class, send her to buy something for him, or ask her to bring books to his base room, where he would engage her in conversation and try to touch her - while the class tried to listen to what they were saying. He gave her money, which she boasted about to a friend. Despite being advised against going with a teacher, she ignored her friend but when she told the teacher she was not interested any more, he told her that she could not refuse because he had given her money. She had to pay him the money back.

Another dramatised event was where a teacher had got a girl pregnant. He had told her earlier that he would marry her and give her everything she wanted. Now that the girl was in trouble, the teacher refused to share any responsibility. Both the teacher and the girl were dismissed from school. Another play vividly depicted the harassment that girls went through on a daily basis as a gang of boys lay in wait for them in the bushes leading away from the school; they then pounced on the girls, whistling at them, grabbing them by the breasts and locking them in an embrace which they struggled against.

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boys ambushing a girl on her way from school

After the role play, the girls were asked to write their problems on pieces of paper which were stuck onto a large '**problem wall**'. The problems were then grouped under different headings like 'beatings by teachers', 'touching by teachers', 'boys proposing' etc. These were then prioritised.

For School A, their prioritised problems (in decreasing order of importance, with some items given equal ranking) agreed by all were:

Boys proposing/teachers proposing/sugar daddies proposing
Boys beating us/boys touching us
Textbooks being stolen/only having a few textbooks
Being hungry/teachers beating us
Too much work at home
Old men in the road
Girls shouting

For School C, their prioritised problems were:

Dumping babies (i.e. getting pregnant and abandoning the baby)
Forced to be in love with teachers/forced to be in love with Form 4 boys
Touching by boys/touching by teachers
Abusive language by teachers/beatings by teachers
Pupils smoking and drinking
Shortage of textbooks and chairs/teachers coming late to lessons

It was interesting that by far the most ***commonly mentioned*** problem when they were building the problem wall (beatings by teachers) was not ranked the highest when they came to prioritise them (ranked fourth by both groups).

The researchers and the girls discussed these problems and ranked them according to which were easy to solve and which were difficult. They then looked at how they could best be solved in terms of classifying them as strategies to be undertaken 'by us', 'with us' and 'for us'. Their suggestions for what they themselves could do are reproduced in section 5.2. above. As for what the school could do for them, they wanted boys who assaulted them punished and teachers who were known to make proposals to girls dismissed.

Appendix 6: Teachers' Workshops

These workshops were held with teachers (male and female) in the four schools as part of their January staff development programme.

As already noted, when asked to detail problems they experienced when teaching girls, the teachers revealed much negative stereotyping about girls, e.g. gossiping, day dreaming, fighting over men, behaving childishly. At the same time, despite an insistence on punishment, their strategies to address abuse in schools make positive suggestions which for the large part are practical and implementable. These do however require a significant change of attitude and behaviour on the part of the teachers themselves if they are to bring about significant improvements in the way schools treat girls.

It should also be noted that the four workshops only attracted between 8 and 12 teachers in each school, despite there being between 24 and 48 teachers per school. This would suggest a relatively low level of interest in the issue, or a reluctance to talk about it. It is also likely that the main perpetrators of abuse stayed away.

At the start of the workshop, teachers were shown the list of prioritised problems that the girls had developed during their own workshops. Teachers were asked to rank them in order of priority, with the results shown below (table 1). They were then asked to identify problems that they experienced in teaching girls and then to rank them in order of priority and according to three categories: in class, in and around the school, and outside the school (table 2). Finally, they developed strategies to address the girls' problems, and indirectly the problems they themselves experienced in teaching girls, according to three categories: the teacher, the school and the parents (table 3).

The main findings of the workshop activities are presented for each of the four schools on the following pages.

School A: 8 teachers

Table 1: Girls' problems prioritised by teachers (in decreasing order of importance)

- Boys and teachers proposing
- Not enough textbooks
- Being beaten by boys in school and outside school
- Outside boys waiting for girls by the school gate
- Being hungry at lunch time
- Girls proposing or pushing themselves on teachers
- Too much work at home
- Walking long distances from school

Table 2: Problems that teachers face with girls (prioritised in decreasing importance)

IN CLASS	IN AND AROUND THE SCHOOL	OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL
Disruptive behaviour. Giggling	Unusual desire to be friendly to male teachers – addressing them by their first names	Frequenting beer halls
Day dreaming, moody	Frequent absenteeism	Love affairs with older men
Shyness	Resistance to putting on school uniform	Trouble with boyfriends
Not doing homework	Gossiping	Not taken seriously by men – having to put extra effort
Lack of confidence and concentration	Preferential treatment	Prostitution
Lack of consistency	Truancy	Fighting over married men
Coming late to school	Putting on make up during study time	
Truancy		
Fidgeting		
Reading pornographic magazines and books		

Table 3: Teachers' solution strategies (prioritised in decreasing importance)

TEACHER STRATEGY	SCHOOL STRATEGY	PARENT STRATEGY
Guidance and counselling of individual pupils	Invite resource persons, police etc to talk to the girls	Talk to girls about the problems they are facing
Know every pupil you teach by name and individually	Create a friendly environment	Create a friendly environment
Create a friendly environment	Provide guidance and counselling	Treat boys and girls equally
Appoint them as group leaders	Make an effort to find the cause of their problems	Supervise children at home to ensure that they do their work
Punishment	Provide good library materials for reading	Do not give children too much pocket money
Educate them about children's rights	Provide civic education	Check whom they play or move around with
	Provide peer education	Counselling
	Give help to communities as a sign of developing respect	Buy books on life and education
	Appoint a youth educator /counsellor at each school full time	Work closely with teachers and accept what teachers say about their children
	Guidance and counselling to be taught by a qualified person not just by a senior teacher who may be too busy with administration issues	

School B: 8 teachers

Table 1: Girls' problems prioritised by teachers (in decreasing order of importance)

- Shortage of books and furniture
- Proposing by boys and teachers
- Pupils smoking and drinking
- Being harassed by sugar daddies and boys on the road
- Books being stolen
- Beatings by teachers
- Abusive language by teachers
- Being hungry at lunchtime

Table 2: Problems that teachers face with girls (prioritised in decreasing importance)

IN CLASS	IN AND AROUND THE SCHOOL	OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL
Lack of interest in class work	Showing little respect for teachers	Running away and staying with boyfriends
Easily giving up on class work problems	Indecent clothing	Getting involved with sugar daddies
Giggling and disruptive behaviour	Gossiping	Hanging out at the shopping centre and beer halls
Day dreaming	Fighting over boyfriends	Prostitution
Excessively concerned with their looks	Using book money as pocket money	Illegal abortion
Visiting male teachers' base rooms		Showing little respect for parents and guardians.

Table 3: Teachers' solution strategies (prioritised in decreasing importance)

TEACHER STRATEGY	SCHOOL STRATEGY	PARENT STRATEGY
Informal talks	Accommodate a 'Principals hour' for head and pupils each week	Discuss children's progress with teachers
Guidance and counselling lessons	Invite questions and suggestions from pupils (suggestion box)	Discuss growing up, sex and its dangers with children
Debates between boys and girls	Invite resource persons to address pupils	Support children on sports days
Encourage speaking, drawing and write ups from pupils	Visit other schools and institutions with pupils	Help pupils start sport or social clubs in the community
Educate pupils on their rights	Involve pupils in school assemblies and other school functions	
Help pupils make informed decisions		
Address pupils individually		

School C: 10 teachers

Table 1: Girls' problems prioritised by teachers (in decreasing order of importance)

- Beatings by teachers and use of abusive language
- Shortages of textbooks and chairs
- Pupils smoking and drinking
- Teachers coming late for lessons
- Friendship with teachers
- Having sex with teachers and older men
- Dumping babies
- Touching by boys and teachers

Table 2: Problems that teachers face with girls (decreasing importance)

IN CLASS	IN AND AROUND THE SCHOOL	OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL
Harassment by male pupils	Behaving childishly	Unusual laughter
Shyness	Being noisy	Forcing themselves on teachers in order to fall pregnant
Cheating in class		
Not being properly dressed	Fighting over men	Absconding during school trips
Noisy and childish	Stealing bras, socks	

Table 3: Teachers' solution strategies (prioritised in decreasing importance)

TEACHER STRATEGY	SCHOOL STRATEGY	PARENT STRATEGY
Informal talks with girls	Guidance and counselling lessons	Discuss the child's progress with the teacher
Involve them in competitions	Involve them in debates speaking	Give time to girls to do home work
Guidance and counselling	Treat boys and girls equally	Help girls raise their self-esteem
Meetings with girls	Have seminars with girls from other schools and those within the school	Openly discuss issues about growing up with their daughters
Punishment	Punishment	Share their experiences of growing up
Mixing boys and girls during activities	Suspension	Check on girls' progress at school in behaviour and homework
Encourage them to speak out	Expulsion	

School D: 12 teachers

Table 1: Girls' problems prioritised by teachers (in decreasing order of importance)

- Teachers and boys proposing
- Boys and sugar daddies waiting outside the school gate and on the way home
- Girls being touched by male teachers
- Girls proposing or pushing themselves on male teachers
- Being punished by teachers
- Abusive language by teachers
- Favouritism by teachers

Table 2: Problems that teachers face with girls (decreasing importance)

IN CLASS	IN AND AROUND THE SCHOOL	OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL
Giggling – very disruptive in class	Walking up and down the corridors in the upper classes or where male teachers are	Going with elderly men
Wanting extra attention	Sexual harassment	Sexual harassment
Silly excuses for no homework	Insults from boys, abusive language – called prostitutes	Loitering in town
Bullying and jeering	Corporal punishment	Domestic violence, being beaten or raped
Lack of confidence	Admiring male teachers	Experimenting with sex and drugs
Peer pressure and neglecting school work	Falling in love with male teachers	Frequenting hotels, prostitution
Shyness	Cellphones ringing	

Table 3: Teachers' solution strategies (prioritised in decreasing importance)

TEACHER STRATEGY	SCHOOL STRATEGY	PARENT STRATEGY
Bunking lessons – teachers should take the register	Guidance and counselling	To avoid prostitution, provide girls with their basic requirements
Insist on girls wearing the correct uniform	Prefects to check on all pupils especially during break and lunch	Monitor the girls' movements and friends before and after school
Give girls duties and responsibilities e.g. make them monitors	Invite role models to speak to girls	Teach moral values
Read love letters aloud to the whole class; the girls will feel embarrassed and stop that behaviour	Invite girls who ruined their lives to speak - as case studies	Be exemplary
Guidance and counselling lessons	Do away with corporal punishment	Be supportive
Advise girls on the importance of education	Do not impose unrealistic rules that protect girls from sexual harassment	Provide guidance and counselling
Be supportive of girls – understand their cultural background	Punish and counsel wrongdoers	Avoid sexual, moral and spiritual violence, abuse and maintain an open relationship
Guidance and counselling	Organisation for workshops	Inform or involve parents in school activities
Motivate girls		Involve the School Development Association, Police, Social Welfare, provide health and sex education
Punishments		

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